REBUILDING OUR VILLAGES

M. K. Gandhi

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REBUILDING OUR VILLAGES

PRINCIPAL EXTENSION TRAINING CENTRE
8 - SEP 1956
GANDHIGRAM

By
M. K. GANDHI

Edited by
BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
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EDITOR'S NOTE

With the launching in various parts of the country of projects for village development and community welfare, it has seemed well to gather together in a concise form Gandhiji's ideas in regard to village reconstruction.

As is well known, Gandhiji regarded himself as a villager, settled in a village, founded several institutions to serve the needs of the village, and tried to do all he could to improve the physical, economic, social and moral condition of the village folk. He had a very clear picture of what required to be done in the villages and what should not be done. In spite of his Western education he was able to bridge the gulf that generally separates the educated in our country from the people of the villages, and had the genius to identify himself with villagers and see their problems with their eyes.

Besides, in accordance with our spiritual traditions he placed very high value on character and spiritual development. Today under the stress of other influences we incline to attach value almost entirely to the production of material wealth. Gandhiji saw that if the world was heading towards self-destruction it was precisely because of pursuit of material ends divorced from moral and spiritual considerations.

Consequently, while his plans for village reconstruction are motivated by a passionate desire to ameliorate hunger and want in the villages, they are also prompted by an equally earnest zeal for realizing

spiritual ends such as non-violence, peace, social justice and freedom in the sense of self-dependence and self-reliance even for the lowliest and the lost. The world is talking of these ideals, but appears to be moving further and further away from them, and drifting towards their opposites, viz. violence, war, social injustice, exploitation and suppression of the weak, regimentation, denial of freedom for a large section of the population, an all-powerful state, and totalitarianism. Gandhiji saw with unerring clarity that if we are to achieve the ideals we profess, we must set about to lay the foundations for them in the everyday life of the people. The great merit of Gandhiji's views in regard to village reconstruction, therefore, lies just in the fact that while planning for our villages he was not concerned merely with raising their economic standard of living but also with laying the basis for peace, justice and freedom for all. We shall completely fail to understand him or see the significance of his suggestions if we do not keep this fact in mind. Much of the criticism levelled against his advocacy of Khadi, for instance, would be avoided if the critic did not use merely his own yardstick of mere material gain but measured it against Gandhiji's yard-stick of both material and spiritual value.

This booklet should be regarded as giving in barest outline what Gandhiji wanted done in the villages. Some items of great importance such as Education, Social Reform, Women's Welfare, Diet and Animal Husbandry are either given very briefly or not included here at all. The reason is that separate volumes have been published by the Navajivan Trust, giving in detail Gandhiji's views on most of these topics. All that is attempted in this book is to touch

on the main items falling under village reconstruction, leaving the interested reader to look up those other volumes for details. On the other hand, items such as village sanitation and advice to village workers are given in greater detail here because they are not dealt with elsewhere.

The titles of articles do not in many cases correspond with the original, but have been given by us to suit the present volume and to indicate the subject treated. The text of the articles is the same as the original, except that in some cases only extracts are given and omissions are not indicated.

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

September 1, 1952

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REBUILDING OUR VILLAGES

I

THE PLACE OF VILLAGES

To serve our villages is to establish Swaraj. Everything else is but an idle dream.

Young India, 26-12-'29

If the village perishes India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost.

Harijan, 29-8-'36

We have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me that cities must subserve villages when that domination goes. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want Swaraj to be built on non-violence, we will have to give the villages their proper place.

Harijan, 20-1-'40

II

VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION (GENERAL)

Village Work under Swaraj

Men or women who would go to the villages would tell the village people that it would be their duty to keep their villages clean and make them self-supporting. They must not expect the Swaraj Government to do these things for them. Our villages are on the verge of destruction owing to the disappearance of village industries. They can be revivified only by a revival of village industries. Among these industries the spinning wheel occupies the centre. The others easily arrange themselves around the wheel. Thus everybody will learn the value of industry, and if all will engage in industries conducive to the welfare of the State, several lakhs of rupees will be saved for the people by the people. And it can be shown that by putting into practice the ideal of self-help and self-sufficiency they will have to pay the lowest taxes and realize a greater degree of happiness in the sum than is possible under any other system.

Under Swaraj based on non-violence nobody is anybody's enemy, everybody contributes his or her due quota to the common goal, all can read and write, and their knowledge keeps growing from day to day. Sickness and disease are reduced to the minimum. No one is a pauper and labour can always find employment. There is no place under such a government for gambling, drinking and immorality or for class hatred. The rich will use their riches wisely and usefully, and not squander them in increasing their pomp and

worldly pleasures. It should not happen that a handful of rich people should live in jewelled palaces and the millions in miserable hovels devoid of sunlight or ventilation. Hindu-Muslim differences, untouchability, vertical differences between high and low, these must not be.

(Extract from a translation of the second appeal issued to the people of Rajkot by Gandhiji).

Harijan, 25-3-'39

Village Swaraj

My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers,

male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

There is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a life time. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman, medicine man and school-master all at once. If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning.

Harijan, 26-7-'42

Village Unit

A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000

souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency.

Harijan, 4-8-'46

All-round Village Development

The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit.

The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. The reconstruction of the villages should not be organized on a temporary but permanent basis.

Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nayi Talim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into water-tight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. Nayi Talim therefore ought to be integrated into the scheme.

Harijan, 10-11-'46

The Place of Money

[From a conversation with Shri Ghanshyamdas Birla]

"Why not make large collections and spread your work over a large area?"

"No, I do not believe in collecting more than I need."

"But supposing you constructed twenty, even ten, model villages?"

"If it is such an easy thing, you might do so with your money. But I know it is not easy. You cannot bring a model village into being by the magic wand of money."

Harijan, 30-11-'35

Dr. Mott: If money is to be given to India, in what ways can it be wisely given without causing any harm? Will money be of any value?

Gandhiji: No. When money is *given* it can only do harm. It has got to be earned when it is required. I am convinced that the American and British money which has been voted for Missionary Societies has done more harm than good. You cannot serve God and Mammon both. And my fear is that Mammon has been sent to serve India and God has remained behind, with the result that He will one day have His vengeance. When the American says, 'I will serve you through money,' I dread him. I simply say to him: 'Send us your engineers not to earn money but to give us the benefit of their scientific knowledge. It is my certain conviction based on experience that money plays the least part in matters of spirit.

Harijan, 26-12-'36

III

VILLAGE SANITATION

Cleaning the Village

The things to attend to in the villages are cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of dung heaps. If the workers will begin the work themselves, working like paid *bhangis* from day to day and always letting the villagers know that they are expected to join them so as ultimately to do the whole work themselves, they may be sure that they will find that the villagers will sooner or later co-operate.

Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste-paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug no deeper than one foot at the most. In his book on Rural Hygiene, Dr. Poore says that excreta should be buried in earth no deeper than nine to twelve inches (I am quoting from memory). The author contends that the superficial earth is charged with minute life, which, together with light and air which easily penetrate it, turn the excreta into good soft sweet-smelling soil within a week. Any villager can test this for himself. The way to do it is either to have fixed

latrines, with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on to the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. This can only be done by the co-operation of the villagers. At the worst, an enterprising villager can collect the excreta and turn them into wealth for himself. At present, this rich manure, valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain.

Village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes, and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that, in spite of this sinful misuse of village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure purity of the water supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers.

This, it will be admitted, is a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India. I hope it is clear from my description of the way in which the problem should be tackled, that, given willing workers who will wield the broom and the shovel with the same ease and pride as the pen and the pencil, the question of expense is almost wholly eliminated. All the outlay that will be required is confined to a broom, a basket, a shovel and a pick-axe, and possibly some disinfectant. Dry ashes are, perhaps, as effective a disinfectant as any that a chemist can supply. But here let philanthropic chemists tell us what is the

most effective and cheap village disinfectant that villagers can improvise in their villages.

Harijan, 8-2-'35

Manure Pits

After quoting from the bulletin on manure pits published by Mr Brayne, Commissioner, Rural Reconstruction, Punjab, Gandhiji wrote:

One can subscribe to all that is said here. I know that the pits such as Mr Brayne suggests are generally recommended. In my opinion, however, superficial burial recommended by Poore is more scientific and more remunerative. The cost of digging is lessened and that of removal avoided altogether or certainly lessened. Add to this the fact that the excreta are turned into manure in almost a week's time, for the reason that the bacteria, which live within six or nine inches of the surface of the earth, and the air and the rays of the sun, act upon the excreta and turn them into sweet manure much more quickly than when the refuse is buried deep.

But the chief thing to remember is not the various methods of disposing of refuse, so much as the necessity of burying all the refuse for the double purpose of promoting the villagers' health and their material condition, through the better yield of their crops which the manure must produce. It should be remembered that organic rubbish other than excreta must be separately buried. Attention to hygiene is undoubtedly the first step to village reconstruction.

Harijan, 1-3-'35

About Night-soil Pits

A correspondent asks:

"(1) What is the length of time that should lapse

before a pit one foot deep could be dug in the same place for a second time, for evacuation ?

"(2) Usually fields are ploughed immediately after paddy is sown. If night-soil is buried in the fields about a week prior to sowing, will it not come up to the surface when the field is ploughed and thus contaminate the feet of the workmen and of the bulls ?"

(1) When superficial burial takes place, according to Poore's formula, seeds may be safely sown after a fortnight's lapse at the most. The same soil will be used for further burial after a year's use.

(2) The question of soiling the feet, whether of human beings or of cattle, can never arise, as nothing can or should be sown without the night-soil being turned into good sweet-smelling manure, which one handles freely without any hesitation.

Harijan, 13-4-'35

Night-soil Disposal

In answer to a village worker's questions Gandhiji wrote :

Even during the rains villagers should perform functions in places not trodden by man. Faeces must be buried. This is a most difficult question owing to the erroneous training of villagers. In Sindi village we are trying to persuade the villagers not to use the streets, to go to the adjoining fields and to throw dry clean earth on their own evacuations. After two months' continuous labour and co-operation of the municipal councillors and others they have been good enough generally to cease to defile the streets. They go to the fields which their owners have been good enough to open for such use. But the villagers still obstinately refuse to throw earth on their own evacuations. 'Surely it is *bhangi*'s work ; it is sinful to look at faeces, more so to throw earth on them,' they say.

They have been taught to believe so. Workers have therefore not to write on a clean slate. They have to rub off what is drawn into the slate with steel points. But I know that if we have faith in our mission, if we have patience enough to persist in the work of daily morning scavenging and, above all, if we don't get irritated against the villagers, their prejudice will disappear as mist before the rays of the sun. Age-hardened ignorance cannot yield to a few months' object-lessons.

We are preparing for the rains in Sindi. Naturally the owners of fields must protect their crops. They cannot, therefore, allow free access to their fields as many do now. We have suggested to them that they should put up fences a few feet inside their boundaries, leaving the marks intact. The few feet they may leave will by the end of the season be richly manured strips of their fields. A time is coming when owners of fields will invite people to use them. Every man constantly using a particular field leaves on it two rupees' worth of manure in a year, if Dr. Fowler's estimate may be accepted. The accuracy of the figure may be doubted. The fact that a field benefits by the deposit of night-soil in it is beyond doubt.

No one has suggested that night-soil may be administered to crops directly as manure. What is meant is that addition of night-soil to earth enriches it after a fixed time. Night-soil after being received into the earth has to undergo certain changes before the earth becomes fit for ploughing and cultivation. The test is infallible. Open up the earth after a stated time where you have buried night-soil. If you find that it is all sweet earth and no smell, no trace of faeces, the soil is fit to receive the seed. I have used night-soil in

this manner for all manner of crops for the past thirty years with the greatest benefit.

Harijan, 11-5-'35

Compost Manure

An all-India Compost Conference was held in New Delhi during the month to consider the question of compost development on the widest scale possible. Several important resolutions were passed by it on schemes for towns and villages. These resolutions are good and useful if they do not remain merely on paper. The chief thing is whether they would be reduced to practice throughout India. Given the willing co-operation of the masses of India, this country can not only drive out shortage of food, but can provide India with more than enough. This organic manure ever enriches, never impoverishes the soil. The daily waste, judiciously composted, returns to the soil in the form of golden manure causing a saving of millions of rupees and increasing manifold, the total yield of grains and pulses. In addition, the judicious use of waste keeps the surroundings clean. And cleanliness is not only next to godliness, it promotes health.

Harijan, 28-12-'47

IV

VILLAGE HEALTH

The Extent of Medical Aid

With the commencement of the activities of the A.I.V.I.A., * medical aid finds a prominent, if not almost an exclusive, place on the programme of many workers. The aid consists in distributing among the villagers free medicines, Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani or Homeopathic, or all combined. Druggists selling these medicines are quite ready to oblige workers approaching them for a few medicines, which cost them a trifle and which, in their opinion, may, if they look at the gift selfishly, bring them more buyers. The poor patients become the victims of well-intentioned, but ill-informed or over-enthusiastic, workers. More than three-fourths of these drugs are not only useless but imperceptibly, if not perceptibly, harmful to the bodies into which they are put. Where they do bring some temporary relief to the patients, their substitutes are as a rule to be found in the village bazaar.

Therefore, A.I.V.I.A. is leaving medical relief of the kind I have described severely alone. Its primary care is educative in matters of health as well as of economy. Are not both inter-related ? Does not health mean wealth for the millions ? Their bodies, not their intellect, are the primary instruments of wealth. The Association, therefore, seeks to teach people how to prevent disease. It is well known that the food of the millions is very deficient in its nourishing value. What they do eat they misuse. Their knowledge of hygiene

* All-India Village Industries Association.

is practically nil. Village sanitation is as bad as it well can be. If, therefore, these defects can be put right and the people imbibe the simple rules of hygiene, most of the ailments they suffer from must disappear without further effort or any outlay of money. Hence the Association does not contemplate opening dispensaries. Investigations are now being made to find out what the villages can supply in the shape of drugs. Satish Babu's cheap remedies * are an effort in that direction. But incredibly simple though they are, he is experimenting with a view to making drastic reduction in the number of these remedies, without diminishing thier efficacy. He is studying the bazaar drugs and testing them and comparing them with the corresponding drugs in the British pharmacopoeia. The desire is to wean the simple villagers from the awe of mysterious pills and infusions.

Harijan, 5-4-'35

Medical Aid

A village worker writes:

> "I am working in a small village of a hundred houses. You have said that attention to sanitation and hygiene should precede medical relief. But what is a worker to do when a villager suffering from fever seeks aid? I have been hitherto advising them to use indigenous herbs obtainable in the village bazaar."

Where cases of fever, constipation or such common diseases come to village workers for help they will certainly have to render such help as they can. Where one is certain of the diagnosis, there is no doubt that the village bazaar medicine is the cheapest and best. If one must stock drugs, castor oil, quinine and

* *Home and Village Doctor*, By Satish Chandra Das Gupta — Khadi Pratisthan, 15, College Square, Calcutta. Pages xxiv+1,287, Price: Rs 10/-.

boiling water are the best medical agents. Castor oil may be locally procurable. The *senna* leaf may serve the same purpose. Quinine I should use sparingly. Every fever does not require quinine treatment. Nor does every fever yield to quinine. Most fevers will disappear after a fast or a semifast. Abstention from cereals, pulses and milk, and taking fruit juices or boiling raisin water, even boiling *gur* water with fresh lemon juice or tamarind, is a semifast. Boiling water is a most powerful medical agent. It may move the bowels, it will induce perspiration and therefore abate fever; it is the safest and cheapest disinfectant. In every case where it is required to be drunk, the water must be allowed to cool till it is fairly bearable to the skin. Boiling does not mean mere heating. The water begins to bubble and evaporate after it is on the boil.

Where the workers do not know for certain what to do, they must allow the local *vaidya* to have full sway. Where he is non-existent or unreliable and the workers know a philanthropic doctor nearby, they may invoke his assistance.

But they will find that the most effective way of dealing even with disease is to attend to sanitation. Let them remember that nature is the finest physician. They may be sure that nature is repairing what man has damaged. She appears to have become powerless when man continuously hampers her. Then she sends death — her last and peremptory agent to destroy what is beyond repair — and provides a fresh garment for the wearer. Sanitary and hygienic workers are therefore the best helpers or the best physicians every person has, whether he knows it or not.

Harijan, 11-5-'35

Medical Relief

Medical relief as part of village work or social service plays an important part in many reports I receive from numerous organizations. This relief consists of medicines supplied to patients who from far and near flock to any person who advertises himself as distributor of such relief. It means no trouble on the part of the medicine man. He need not have much or any knowledge of diseases and the symptoms. Medicines he often receives free from obliging chemists. Donations are always to be had from indiscriminate donors whose conscience is satisfied if they can distribute their charity in aid of suffering humanity.

This social service has appeared to me to be the laziest form of service and often even mischievous. It works mischief when the patient is expected to do nothing save to swallow the drug given to him. He is none the wiser for having received the medicine. If anything he is worse off than before. The knowledge that he can get for nothing or for a trifle a pill or a potion that will correct certain irregularities will tempt him to repeat them. The fact that he gets such aid free of charge will undermine his self-respect which should disdain to receive anything for nothing.

There is another type of medical relief which is a boon. It is given by those who know the nature of diseases, who will tell the patients why they have their particular complaints and will also tell them how to avoid them. Such servants will rush to assist at all odd hours of the day or night. Such discriminating relief is an education in hygiene, teaching the people how to observe cleanliness and to gain health. But such service is rare. In the majority of cases mention of medical relief in reports is a piece of advertisement

leading to donations for other activities requiring perhaps as little exertion or knowledge as medical relief. I would therefore urge all workers in the social field, whether urban or rural, to treat their medical activity as the least important item of service. It would be better to avoid all mention of such relief. Workers would do well to adopt measures that would prevent disease in their localities. Their stock of medicines should be as small as possible. They should study the bazaar medicines available in their villages, know their reputed properties, and use them as far as possible. They will find as we are finding in Sindi that hot water, sunshine, clean salt and soda with an occasional use of castor oil or quinine answer most purposes. We make it a point to send all serious cases to the Civil Hospital. Patients flock to Mirabehn and receive lessons in hygiene and prevention of diseases. They do not resent this method of approach instead of simply being given a powder or a mixture.

Harijan, 9-11-'35

Nature-Cure for Disease

Patients began to come in from the next morning. There were about thirty of them. Gandhiji examined five or six of them and prescribed to them all more or less the same treatment with slight variations, according to the nature of each case, i.e. recitation of *Ramanama*, sun-bath, friction and hip-baths, a simple eliminative diet of milk, buttermilk, fruit and fruit juices with plenty of clean fresh water to drink. "The practice of nature cure", he observed, "does not require high academic qualifications or much erudition. Simplicity is the essence of universality. Nothing that is meant for the benefit of the millions requires much erudition. The latter can be acquired

only by the few and therefore can benefit the rich only. But India lives in her seven lakhs of villages — obscure, tiny, out-of-the-way villages, where the population in some cases hardly exceeds a few hundred, very often not even a few score. I would like to go and settle down in some such village. That is real India, my India, for which I live. You cannot take to these humble people the paraphernalia of highly qualified doctors and hospital equipment. In simple natural remedies and *Ramanama* lies their only hope."

He warned the villagers that they should be prepared to find in him a hard taskmaster. If he stayed in their midst he would neither spare himself nor them. He would visit their homes, inspect their streets, their drains, their kitchens, their latrines. He would tolerate neither dust nor dirt anywhere.

Harijan, 7-4-'46

I hold that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease. Where there is absolute purity, inner and outer, illness becomes impossible. If the village people could but understand this, they would not need doctors, *hakims* or *vaidyas*.

Nature cure implies an ideal mode of life and that in its turn presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the nature cure system revolves.

Harijan, 26-5-'46

Nature cure implies that the treatment should be the cheapest and the simplest possible. The ideal is that such treatment should be carried out in the villages. The villagers should be able to provide the

necessary means and equipment. What cannot be had in the villages should be procured. Nature cure does mean a change for the better in one's outlook on life itself. It means regulation of one's life in accordance with the laws of health. It is not a matter of taking the free medicine from the hospital or for fees. A man who takes free treatment from the hospital accepts charity. The man who accepts nature cure never begs. Self-help enhances self-respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future.

Right diet and balanced diet are necessary. Today our villages are as bankrupt as we are ourselves. To produce enough vegetables, fruits and milk in the villages, is an essential part of the nature cure scheme. Time spent on this should not be considered a waste. It is bound to benefit all the villagers and ultimately the whole of India.

Harijan, 2-6-'46

The nature cure of my conception for the villagers is limited to rendering such aid as can be given to them through what can be procured in the village. For example, I would not need either electricity or ice for them. Such work can only be for those like me who have become village-minded.

Harijan, 11-8-'46

In answer to a question, Gandhiji said ' My nature cure is designed solely for villagers and villages. Therefore, there is no place in it for the microscope, X-rays and similar things. Nor is there room in nature cure for medicines, such as quinine, emetin and penicillin. Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If

everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there could be no disease. And, while obeying all the laws of nature in order to cure illness, if it does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in *Ramanama*. But this cure through *Ramanama* cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physician has to be a living embodiment of the power of *Ramanama*. Meantime, all that can possibly be had from the five agencies of nature must be taken and used. They are earth, water, ether, fire and wind. This, to my mind, is the limit of nature cure. Therefore, my experiment in Uruli Kanchan consists in teaching the villagers how to live clean and healthy lives and in trying to cure the sick through the proper use of the five agencies. If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally, may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet is, of course, an indispensable part of nature cure.

Harijan, 11-8-'46

Laws of Health

Shri Brijlal Nehru, himself a faddist like me, has written to the Press belauding the statement of the Minister of Health that "a very great deal of our ill-health is due to our own fault" and saying that there is to his knowledge no governmental agency responsible for removing this fault. He adds: "The attention of our Health Ministers has so far been confined to the establishment of hospitals, sanitaria, clinics, dispensaries, etc., i.e. devices for the treatment of disease; no institutions have been founded for the prevention of disease by bringing home to the people the need of correct living and the methods of doing so."

He then goes on to suggest that "a separate branch be established to attend to the promotion of

health as distinguished from treatment of disease. This agency may be given the assistance of an advisory body of both experts and laymen so that the experts may devise their schemes with the full knowledge of the requirements of the people and the limitations under which they have to live and work." Why does this fellow faddist want a separate branch for this very necessary purpose? This was the fashion under the old regime which went on piling expenditure on expenditure and deluded itself and the gullible public that the greater the expense the greater the utility. I would have the Minister of Health require the doctors under her and the other staff understand that their first care must be the attainment and preservation of the health of the public whom they are paid to serve.

As a preliminary step the writer "would have the production of a book on health laws and correct living in the conditions prevailing in India. To carry weight with the public, the book must be brought out under the authority of the Health Ministry of the Government of India....The duty of writing such a book may be entrusted to the Indian Medical Association, who should be required to produce it within a stated time. A transfer of emphasis from disease to health in the teaching given in our medical colleges would in itself be most desirable."

Indeed, the teaching of the laws of Health should be obligatory in all schools and colleges. If the treatise recommended by Shri Brijlal Nehru is brought out, I hope the authors would be instructed to avoid the introduction of disease under the guise of preserving health such as the craze for various inoculations.

Harijan, 28-12-'47

V

VILLAGE DIET

Green Leaves

Take up any modern text-book on food or vitamins, and you would find in it a strong recommendation to take a few edible green leaves uncooked at every meal. Of course, these should always be well washed half a dozen times to remove all dirt. These leaves are to be had in every village for the trouble of picking. And yet greens are supposed to be only a delicacy of cities. Villagers in many parts of India live on *dal* and rice or *roti*, and plenty of chillies, which harm the system. Since the economic reorganization of villages has been commenced with food reform, it is necessary to find out the simplest and cheapest foods that would enable villagers to regain lost health. The addition of green leaves to their meals will enable villagers to avoid many diseases from which they are now suffering. The villagers' food is deficient in vitamins ; many of them can be supplied by fresh green leaves. An eminent English doctor told me in Delhi that a proper use of green leaves was calculated to revolutionize the customary notions of food and that much of what was today being supplied by milk might be supplied by green leaves. That, of course, means elaborate research and examination in detail of the nourishing properties of the innumerable leaves that are to be found hidden among the grasses that grow wild in India.

Harijan, 15-2-'35

A Talk to Village Workers

As today's menu was selected by me with some careful thought, and especially with a view to the needs of village workers, I must speak to you about it at some length. The idea was to provide you with food, nourishing and yet within the means of an average villager and within the possibility of an eight hours' minimum wage as we have fixed it, i.e. three annas.

We were 98 diners today and the total cost of our food was Rs 9-14-3, which means that each meal cost slightly more than 6 pice. Here are the details:

			Rs	as	ps
36 lbs.	Wheat flour	..	1	8	0
12 ,,	Tomatoes	..	0	11	3
4 ,,	Jaggery	..	0	6	3
24 ,,	Red gourd	..	0	7	6
6 ,,	Linseed oil	..	1	2	0
25 ,,	Milk	..	3	13	0
4 ,,	Soya Bean	..	0	6	0
4	Cocoanuts	..	0	4	0
16	*Koth* fruit	..	0	2	0
	Tamarind and salt	..	0	2	3
	Fuel	..	1	0	0
		Total Rs	9	14	3

Vinoba had passed on the suggestion to me that I need not worry about giving all of you *roti* but might simply give you wheaten porridge (that we have here every morning) and thus save a lot of trouble. No, said I to myself; you young men whom God has given strong teeth must have good hard well baked *bhakri*, which anyone can make, which one can easily carry on one's person from place to place, and which can

keep for a couple of days. Before the dough was kneaded it was treated with linseed oil. This rendered it both soft and crisp. Then, as we must have some greens and raw vegetables, we had tomatoes and two *chatnis* — one made of *Koth* fruit available in plenty in these parts and another made of leaves available in our garden. *Koth* fruit is known for both its aperient and astringent properties, and jaggery goes well with it and makes a delicious *chatni*. The other *chatni* contained some cocoanut, tamarind and salt to spice the leaves. Green leaves must be eaten by us in some form or other, in order that we may get proper vitamins in our diet. The vegetable chosen was the cheapest available and grows everywhere in our villages. You will see that I allowed the use of tamarind in the preparation of *chatni*. In spite of the popular prejudice against tamarind, it has been found that it is a good aperient and blood-purifier. I gave copious doses of tamarind water to one of the inmates suffering from malaria with very good effect and have tried it in several cases of constipation.

Milk is an essential article of diet. Your menu contained half a pound of milk, but you must have seen that I gave you no ghee. I hope, however, that you did not miss it. Where procuring good ghee is a doubtful proposition, why have spurious ghee? But milk or buttermilk we ought to have, no matter how little. Medical men say that it helps in the assimilation of the vegetable fats and proteins. Therefore, ghee you can omit with impunity.

This is one of the two main things you have to do — to ensure to villagers a balanced diet, and to content yourselves with the same. There may be some who burden their diet with useless articles and many

whose diet is badly deficient in vitamins. You have to introduce the right kind of diet to them. You will learn cow-keeping yourselves and encourage cow-keeping among villagers. It ought to be considered a shame that milk is not available in many of our villages. The second main duty is sanitation — a most difficult thing indeed. But if you have succeeded in introducing the right kind of diet and making the sanitation of your village tolerably good, you will have rendered human bodies worthy of becoming temples of God and efficient tools for doing a good day's work.

Harijan, 2-11-'35

VI

VILLAGE EDUCATION

With the best motives in the world, the English tutors could not wholly understand the difference between English and Indian requirements. Our climate does not require the buildings which they need. Nor do our children brought up in predominantly rural environment need the type of education the English children brought up in surroundings predominantly urban need.

When our children are admitted to schools, they need, not slate and pencil and books, but simple village tools which they can handle freely and remuneratively. This means a revolution in educational methods. But nothing short of a revolution can put education within reach of every child of school-going age.

It is admitted that the so-called knowledge of the three R's that is at present given in Government

schools is of little use to the boys and girls in after life. Most of it is forgotten inside of one year, if only for want of use. It is not required in their village surroundings.

But if a vocational training in keeping with their surroundings was given to the children, they would not only repay the expenses incurred in the schools but would turn that training to use in after life. I can imagine a school entirely self-supporting, if it became say a spinning and weaving institution with perhaps a cotton field attached to it.

The scheme I am adumbrating does not exclude literary training. No course of primary instruction would be considered complete that did not include reading, writing and arithmetic. Only, reading and writing would come during the last year when really the boy or girl is the readiest for learning the alphabet correctly. Handwriting is an art. Every letter must be correctly drawn, as an artist would draw his figures. This can only be done if the boys and girls are first taught elementary drawing. Thus side by side with vocational training which would occupy most of the day at school, they would be receiving vocal instruction in elementary history, geography and arithmetic. They would learn manners, have object lessons in practical sanitation and hygiene, all of which they would take to their homes in which they would become silent revolutionists.

Young India, 11-7-'29

VII

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES AND AGRICULTURE

Cloth

The ideal no doubt is for every village to spin and weave for itself just as today most villages grow corn for themselves. It is easier for every village to spin and weave for itself than to grow all its corn. Every village can stock enough cotton and spin and weave without any difficulty.

Young India, 11-8-'21

The spinning wheel for us is the foundation for all public corporate life. It is impossible to build any permanent public life without it. It is the one visible link that indissolubly binds us to the lowest in the land and thus gives them a hope. We may or must add many things to it but let us first make sure of it even as a wise mason makes sure of his foundation before he begins to build the superstructure, and the bigger the structure the deeper and stronger the foundation. For the result to be obtained therefore spinning should become universal in India.

Young India, 4-9-'24

Spinning for wages should be introduced only in those villages where people are in perpetual want because they do not get enough from agriculture and because they have leisure.

Spinning for one's own requirements should be introduced in all the villages irrespective of poverty. In such cases the help to be given to the people should take the form of teaching them ginning, carding, or spinning as the case may be and supplying them with

cotton and accessories at cost price and getting their yarn woven for them at ordinary rates.

Young India, 2-5-'29

The Charkha

The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the *charkha*. The *charkha* supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the *charkha* included all the anterior and posterior industries — ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy. The *charkha* enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self-contained. With the exit of the *charkha* went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took the place of these industries. Therefore the villages were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them.

Hence, if the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the *charkha* and all it means.

This revival cannot take place without an army of selfless Indians of intelligence and patriotism working with a single mind in the villages to spread the message of the *charkha* and bring a ray of hope and light into their lustreless eyes. This is a mighty effort at co-operation and adult education of the correct type. It brings about a silent and sure revolution like the silent but sure and life-giving revolution of the *charkha*.

Twenty years' experience of *charkha* work has convinced me of the correctness of the argument here

advanced by me. The *charkha* has served the poor Muslims and Hindus in almost an equal measure. Nearly five crores of rupees have been put into the pockets of these lakhs of village artisans without fuss and tomtoming.

Hence I say without hesitation that the *charkha* must lead us to Swaraj in terms of the masses belonging to all faiths. The *charkha* restores the villages to their rightful place and abolishes distinctions between high and low.

Harijan, 13-4-'40

Village Industries

As the author of the Congress resolutions on village industries and as the sole guide of the Association that is being formed for their promotion, it is but meet that I should, as far as possible, share with the public the ideas that are uppermost in my mind regarding these industries.

The idea of forming the Association took definite shape during the Harijan tour as early as when I entered Malabar. A casual talk with a Khadi worker showed to me how necessary it was to have a body that would make an honest attempt to return to the villagers what has been cruelly and thoughtlessly snatched away from them by the city dwellers.

Few know today that agriculture in the small and irregular holdings of India is not a paying proposition. The villagers live a lifeless life. Their life is a process of slow starvation. They are burdened with debts. The money lender lends, because he cannot do otherwise. He will lose all if he does not. This system of village lending baffles investigation. Our knowledge of it is superficial, in spite of elaborate inquiries.

Extinction of village industries would complete the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India.

I have seen in the daily press criticism of the proposals I have adumbrated. Advice has been given to me that I must look for salvation in the direction of using the powers of nature that the inventive brain of man has brought under subjection. The critics say that water, air, oil, and electricity should be fully utilized as they are being utilized in the go-ahead West. They say that control over these hidden powers of nature enables every American to have thirty three slaves.

Repeat the process in India and I dare say that it will thirty three times enslave every inhabitant of this land, instead of giving every one thirty three slaves.

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out

cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest Khadi woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal miner who can use it there and then, nor is Khadi dear for the villager who manufactures his own Khadi. But if the cloth manufactured in mills displaces village hands, rice mills and flour-mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers, but damage the health of the whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet even where they have no objection to eating it if they can get it, it is sinful to deprive them of nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheatmeal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice.

I have drawn attention to some broad glaring facts to show that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization but that it lies through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

Hence the function of the All-India Village Industries Association must, in my opinion, be to encourage the existing industries and to revive where it is possible and desirable, the dying or dead industries of villages according to the village methods, i.e., the villagers working in their own cottages as they have done from times immemorial. These simple methods can be considerably improved as they have been in hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate

effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages, they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time and efficiency of work. All these things are today being done by the All-India Spinners' Association in over 5,000 villages.

But Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support Khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, Khadi could not make further progress. For villages to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. That is what the two Associations are expected to do.

I know that there is a school of thought that does not regard Khadi, as an economic proposition at all. I hope that they will not be scared by my having mentioned Khadi as the centre of village activities. I could not complete the picture of my mind without showing the inter-relation between Khadi and the other village industries. Those who do not see it are welcome only to concentrate their effort on the other industries.

Harijan, 16-11-'34

Village Industries Scheme

The idea behind the village industries scheme is that we should look to the villages for the supply of

our daily needs and that, when we find that some needs are not so supplied, we should see whether with a little trouble and organization they cannot be profitably supplied by the villagers. In estimating the profit, we should think of the villager, not of ourselves. It may be that in the initial stages we might have to pay a little more than the ordinary price and get an inferior article in the bargain. Things will improve, if we will interest ourselves in the supplier of our needs and insist on his doing better and take the trouble of helping him to do better.

Harijan, 23-11-'34

Why not Labour Saving Devices

In reply to a correspondent, who objected to hand-husking of rice and hand-grinding of flour, Gandhiji replied :

I have no partiality for return to the primitive method of grinding and husking for the sake of them. I suggest the return, because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness. In my opinion, village uplift is impossible, unless we solve the pressing economic distress. Therefore, to induce the villagers to utilize their idle hours is in itself solid uplift work.

Harijan, 30-11-'34

Why Village Industries

There is hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now. If we perform the mental trick and fix our gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the villagers, whereas at the present moment we are exploiting the villagers without making any return worth the name. It is time we arrested the progress of the tragedy. To me, the

campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city dweller, the villages have become untouchable. He does not know them, he will not live in them, and if he finds himself in a village, he will want to reproduce the city life there. This would be tolerable, if we could bring into being cities which would accommodate 30 crores of human beings. This is much more impossible than the one of reviving the village industries and stopping the progressive poverty, which is due as much to enforced unemployment as to any other cause.

Harijan, 30-11-'34

Use Village Manufactures

(From a speech)

We are guilty of a grievous wrong against the villagers, and the only way in which we can expiate it is by encouraging them to revive their lost industries and arts by assuring them of a ready market. There is no one more patient and forbearing than God, but there comes a limit even to His patience and forbearance. If we neglect our duty to our villages, we shall be courting our own ruin. This duty is no onerous one. It is incredibly simple. We have to be rural-minded and think of our necessities and the necessities of our household in the terms of rural-mindedness. The task does not involve much expenditure either. Volunteers are needed to go to the nearest villages to assure them that all that they produce would find a ready market in the towns and cities. This is a task which can be undertaken by men and women of all castes and creeds, of all parties and all

faiths. It is in consonance with the true economics of our country.

Harijan, 1-3-'35

Villages to be Free from Exploitation

(From a conversation)

The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

Harijan, 29-8-'36

Utilization of Available Power

Q. Flour grinding machines are turned by engines in thousands of villages in Gujarat. By removing them to the source these engines could easily be used for drawing water from rivers, tanks and wells for purposes of irrigation. Could not the Government be induced or the owners be persuaded to divert the engines for this useful work in addition to working the grinders?

A. I regard the existence of power wheels for the grinding of corn in thousands of villages as the limit of our helplessness. I suppose India does not produce all the engines or grinding machines. I fondly hope that the correspondent is incorrect and that the number of wheels and engines does not run into thousands even for the whole of India. But if true, it

is indicative of the utter laziness into which our people have fallen. The planting of such machinery and engines on a large scale in villages is also a sign of greed. Is it proper to fill one's pockets in this manner at the expense of the poor ? Every such machinery puts thousands of hand-*chakhis* out of work and takes away employment from thousands of housewives and artisans who make these *chakhis*. Moreover, the process is infective and will spread to every village industry. The decay of the latter spells too the decay of art. If it meant replacement of old crafts by new ones, one might not have much to say against it. But this is not what is happening. In the thousands of villages where power machinery exists, one misses the sweet music in the early morning of the grinders at work.

But to come to the main point. Whilst I hold that these power engines are at present being put to wrong use, it would be some compensation if the engines, in addition to their present use, were also used to pump water out of rivers, tanks and wells for irrigation. My correspondent suggests Government aid for this. Must this be necessary ? Will not the owners of their own free will turn their engines towards this useful and necessary work ? Or have we been reduced to such a paralytic state that without Government compulsion we are unprepared to do anything ? Be that as it may, it is my firm opinion that all necessary measures should be taken at once to utilize existing power in order to save the people from the terrible fate confronting them.

Harijan, 10-3-'46

VIII

LAND TENURE AND THE IDEAL OF NON-VIOLENCE

Zamindars

The Zamindars would do well to take time by the forelock. Let them cease to be mere rent collectors. They should become trustees and trusted friends of their tenants. They should limit their privy purse. Let them forgo the questionable perquisites they take from the tenants in the shape of forced gifts on marriage and other occasions or *nazrana* on transfer of holdings from one *kisan* to another or on restoration to the same *kisan* after eviction for non-payment of rent. They should give them fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare, provide well managed schools for their children, night schools for adults, hospitals and dispensaries for the sick, look after the sanitation of villages and in a variety of ways make them feel that they, the Zamindars, are their true friends taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services. In short, they must justify their position. They should trust Congressmen. They may themselves become Congressmen and know that the Congress is a bridge between the people and the Government. All who have the true welfare of the people at heart can harness the services of the Congress. Congressmen will on their part see to it that *kisans* scrupulously fulfil their obligations to the Zamindars. I mean not necessarily the statutory, but the obligations which they have themselves admitted to be just. They must reject the doctrine that their holdings are

absolutely theirs to the exclusion of the Zamindars. They are or should be members of a joint family in which the Zamindar is the head guarding their rights against encroachment. Whatever the law may be, the Zamindari to be defensible must approach the conditions of a joint family.

Young India, 28-5-'31

Zamindars and Talukdars

The hideous caricature of *Varnashrama* is responsible for the air of superiority that the so-called Kshatriya assumes and the status of inherited inferiority the poor ryot submissively recognizes as his deserved lot in life. If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that the ryot possesses the same soul that they do, and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They must regard themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living. A model Zamindar would therefore at once reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing, he would come in intimate touch with the ryots and know their wants, and inject hope into them in the place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryots' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He will reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessaries of life. He will

study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the ryot. He will use as hospital, school, or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which not even the armed force that a powerful Government can bring into play can avert. I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster. The privilege I had of meeting intimately some of the young Talukdars in the U. P. has strengthened the hope.

Young India, 5-12-'29

Equal Distribution

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all

his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life,

then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that Ahimsa is pre-eminently a

weapon for individuals and its use should therefore be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing dicoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains, because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But *avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the

right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of Ahimsa entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

I scarcely need to write anything about non-co-operation and civil disobedience, for my readers are familiar with these and their working.

Harijan, 25-8-'40

Non-violent Means

Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince' head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and *vice versa*. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world.

Harijan, 13-7-'47

Non-violent Economy

(Extract from a speech)

Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible. Indeed the very word non-violence, a negative word, means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life. Therefore whoever believes in Ahimsa will engage himself in occupations that involve the least possible violence. Thus, for instance, one cannot conceive of a man believing in non-violence carrying on the occupation of a butcher. Not that a meat-eater cannot be non-violent, but even a meat-eater believing in non-violence will not go in for *shikar*, and he will not engage in war or war preparations. Thus there are many activities and occupations which necessarily involve violence and must be eschewed by a non-violent man. But there is agriculture without which life is impossible, and which does involve a certain amount of violence. The determining factor therefore is — is the occupation founded on violence? But since all activity involves some measure of violence, all we have to do is to minimize the violence involved in it. This is not possible without a heart-belief in non-violence. Suppose there is a man who does no actual violence, who labours for his bread, but who is always consumed with envy at other

people's wealth or prosperity. He is not non-violent. A non-violent occupation is thus that occupation which is fundamentally free from violence and which involves no exploitation or envy of others.

Now I have no historical proof, but I believe that there was a time in India when village economics were organized on the basis of such non-violent occupations, not on the basis of the rights of man but on the duties of man. Those who engaged themselves in such occupations did earn their living, but their labour contributed to the good of the community. A carpenter, for instance, ministered to the needs of the village farmer. He got no cash payment but was paid in kind by the villagers. There could be injustice even in this system, but it would be reduced to a minimum. I speak from personal knowledge of the life in Kathiawad of over sixty years ago. There was more lustre in people's eyes, and more life in their limbs, than you find today. It was a life founded on unconscious Ahimsa.

Body labour was at the core of these occupations and industries, and there was no large scale machinery. For when a man is content to own only so much land as he can till with his own labour, he cannot exploit others. Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery. Large scale machinery concentrates wealth in the hands of one man who lords it over the rest who slave for him. For he may be trying to create ideal conditions for his workmen, but it is none the less exploitation which is a form of violence.

When I say that there was a time when society was based not on exploitation but on justice, I mean to suggest that truth and Ahimsa were not virtues confined to individuals but were practised by

communities. To me virtue ceases to have any value if it is cloistered or possible only for individuals.

Harijan, 1-9-'40

IX

VILLAGE TRANSPORT

A Plea for the Village Cart

Shri Ishverbhai S. Amin of Baroda sends me a long note on animal power *v.* machine power. From it I copy the following relevant portion :

"Animal power is not costlier than machine power in fields or short distance work and hence can compete with the latter in most cases. The present-day tendency is towards discarding animal power in preference to machine power.

Take for example a bullock-driven cart, costing Rs 100 and Rs 200 for the bullocks. The bullocks can drive the cart at least 15 miles per day with a load of 16 Bengal maunds on rough sandy village roads. This service will cost Re 0-12-0 for two bullocks, Re 0-6-0 for the cartman and Re 0-4-0 for cart depreciation, in total Re 1-6-0 per day. A one-ton motor lorry will cost for 15 miles at least one gallon of petrol, some lubricating oil, huge repair and upkeep expenses, and a costly driver. For 15 miles' run the lorry will cost Re 1-12-0 for petrol including lubricating oil, Re 0-12-0 for maintenance at the rate of Rs 6 per day of eight hours' service, and Re 0-8-0 for the driver, cleaner and extra men required to load and empty the lorry. Hence the total cost is Rs 2-12-0 i.e. Re 1-6-0 per cartload of 16 Bengal maunds. One bullock cart is able to carry 7 to 8 cartloads of manure in one day from the village site to the field which is about ½ mile away and will cost only Re 1-6-0 plus Re 0-6-0 for the extra man required to help the cartman to fill and empty the cart. While a motor lorry to do this job will not cost in any way less. A motor lorry may compete when it has to carry loads at a stretch for a long distance on a good metal road, where bullock carts seem too

slow and uneconomical. It is also not desirable to take animals long distances at one stretch as it tells much upon their energy and strength. Bullock carts, however, have been found toiling long distances all day and night in competition with motor lorries from railway stations to far-off interior places, but the physical condition of these bullocks is pitiable, because the owners give them less food in proportion to the low earning. It is the slowness only which goes against the bullock cart, when rapid transport of goods or the movement of men from one place to another is considered important. Villagers, however, to whom spare time brings no money and time saved by motor is of no importance, should make it a point to walk for short distances and use carts for long journeys. If a farmer has his own cart and travels in it, he has not to spend anything in the form of ready money but uses the produce of his own field in producing power by feeding bullocks. Really grass and grain should be looked upon by the farmer as his petrol, and the cart the motor lorry, and bullocks the engine converting grass into power. The machine will neither consume grass nor will it yield manure, an article of vast importance. Then the villager has to have his bullocks; in any case he has his grass. And if he has a cart, he is maintaining the village carpenter and the blacksmith; and if he is keeping a cow, he is maintaining a hydrogenation plant converting vegetable oil into solid butter or ghee and also at the same time a bullock manufacturing machine — thus serving a twofold purpose."

The invasion of the motor lorry may or may not succeed. It would be wisdom if intelligent workers will study the pros and cons and definitely guide the villagers. Shri Ishverbhai's note should provoke the thought of all village workers in the direction indicated in it.

Harijan, 3-7-'37

Motor *v.* Cart

Gram Udyog Patrika for August examines the respective merits of motor vans and carts for village

propaganda. Those who will read the whole argument should send for the *Patrika*. I give below the most important part of the argument :

"We have been asked whether District Boards and other such local bodies, who wish to set apart a certain amount of money for village work will do well to invest in motor vans for propaganda work of various kinds in villages. It is a happy sign that institutions such as these are beginning to realize their duty to the villages and are seeking to bridge the gulf that now exists between towns and villages and between the literate and the illiterate. The question is whether speeding up matters by the use of motor vans which can visit more than one village in a night will suit the purpose.

In all our expenditure, especially when that expenditure is undertaken expressly for the benefit of the village people, it is necessary to see that the money spent goes back to the villager. District and Local Boards obtain their money from the people, and their purchases must be such as will help to circulate money among the people. If on the other hand the money taken from the villagers by way of rates and taxes is sent out of the locality, it must necessarily result in impoverishment of the people, and this will perforce mean that there will be less and less money in the coffers of District and Local Boards.

A Local Board does not set apart more than a few thousands of rupees for village work. If it decides to buy even one motor van for the purpose, it means about Rs 5,000 sent out of the locality to pay for the van and, in addition, constant expenditure on tyres and other spare parts, besides day to day expenditure on petrol, all of which are imported and to pay for which money has to be drained out of the locality. The manifest object of this expenditure is rural welfare, but, in order to be able to hear occasional lectures on agriculture, health, prohibition, child welfare and such like, or to listen to the gramophone or the radio, the villager has to bear this heavy expenditure when he and his family have to live on about Rs 2 a month. What the villager needs above all is profitable employment. We steadily deprive him of employment by buying imported

articles, and by way of compensation give him lectures, magic lantern shows and tinned music all at his expense, and pat ourselves on the back that we are working for his welfare. Can anything be more absurd?

Compare with this what happens if in the place of the motor van the much despised bullock cart were used. It will not make so much stir nor so effectively declare to all the world that something wonderful is being done for the villages. But if mere stage-acting and trumpet-blowing are not intended but real quiet constructive work, then we submit that the bullock cart will do much better. It can reach the most remote villages which a motor lorry cannot do. It costs only a fraction of the money required for a van, so that many bullock carts can be bought, if necesary, to serve groups of villages in the district. The money spent on them goes to the village carpenter, blacksmith and cart-driver. Not a pie of it need go out of the district. The cart itself may be made an exhibit if it is scientifically constructed with disked wheels, proper steel bearings, and axles with well placed and designed hubs, spokes and felloes. The expenditure on equipment consequently instead of draining wealth out of the village will direct it into it. A motor is necessary where speed is of the essence of the work to be done. But nothing of the kind can be claimed for propaganda to be carried on in villages for rural welfare. On the other hand, slow, steady methods will be of greater avail. It will be an advantage not to be able to rush from one village to another but to spend some time in each place. Only thus can the life and the problems of the people be properly understood, and the work directed to meet those problems be effective.

Rural work and motor vans appear, therefore, to go ill together. What is required is steady, constructive effort, not lightning speed and empty show. We would commend to Local Boards and public institutions genuinely interested in village welfare to start by using only village-made goods, to study the conditions which are steadily producing poverty in the villages, and concentrate on removing them one by one. When every side of village life needs intensive, well-considered effort, it seems a waste of public money to throw

it away on methods which attempt to bring about village uplift overnight."

It is to be hoped that those who interest themselves in village welfare will take to heart the obvious argument advanced in favour of the cart. It will be cruel to destroy the village economy through the very agency designed for village welfare.

Harijan, 16-9-'39

Village Cattle

(From a talk to villagers)

The bullocks are the means of transport everywhere in our villages and have not ceased to be such even in a place like Simla. The railway train and the motor car go there, but all along the mountain road I found bullocks trudging up and down dragging heavily-laden carts. It seems as if this means of transport is part of our lives and our civilization. And the bullock has to endure if our handicraft civilization is to endure.

You have to find out whose animals are the best and to discover how he manages to keep them so well. You will find out whose cow gives the largest amount of milk and discover how he keeps her and feeds her. You may fix some prize for the best bullock and the best cow in the village. Without model cattle we cannot have a model village.

Harijan, 15-9-'40

X

VILLAGE SELF-GOVERNMENT

Panchayats

Panchayat has an ancient flavour; it is a good word. It literally means an assembly of five elected by villagers. It represents the system, by which the innumerable village republics of India were governed. But the British Government, by its ruthlessly thorough method of revenue collection, almost destroyed these ancient republics, which could not stand the shock of this revenue collection. Congressmen are now making a crude attempt to revive the system by giving village elders civil and criminal jurisdiction. The attempt was first made in 1921. It failed. It is being made again, and it will fail if it is not systematically and decently, I will not say, scientifically, tried.

It was reported to me in Nainital, that in certain places in the U.P., even criminal cases like rape were tried by the so-called Panchayats. I heard of some fantastic judgments pronounced by ignorant or interested Panchayats. This is all bad if it is true. Irregular Panchayats are bound to fall to pieces under their own unsupportable weight. I suggest therefore the following rules for the guidance of village workers:

1. No Panchayat should be set up without the written sanction of a Provincial Congress Committee;

2. A Panchayat should in the first instance be elected by a public meeting called for the purpose by beat of drums;

3. It should be recommended by the Tahsil Committee;

4. Such Panchayat should have no criminal jurisdictoin ;

5. It may try civil suits if the parties to them refer their disputes to the Panchayat ;

6. No one should be compelled to refer any matter to the Panchayat ;

7. No Panchayat should have any authority to impose fines, the only sanction behind its civil decrees being its moral authority, strict impartiality and the willing obedience of the parties concerned ;

8. There should be no social or other boycott for the time being ;

9. Every Panchayat will be expected to attend to :

(a) The education of boys and girls in its village ;

(b) Its sanitation ;

(c) Its medical needs ;

(d) The upkeep and cleanliness of village wells or ponds ;

(e) The uplift of and the daily wants of the so-called untouchables.

10. A Panchayat, that fails without just cause to attend to the requirements mentioned in clause 9 within six months of its election, or fails otherwise to retain the goodwill of the villagers, or stands self-condemned for any other cause, appearing sufficient to the Provincial Congress Committee, may be disbanded and another elected in its place.

The disability to impose fines or social boycott is a necessity of the case in the initial stages ; social boycott in villages has been found to be a dangerous weapon in the hands of ignorant or unscrupulous men. Imposition of fines too may lead to mischief and defeat

the very end in view. Where a Panchayat is really popular and increases its popularity by the constructive work of the kind suggested in clause 9, it will find its judgments and authority respected by reason of its moral prestige. And that surely is the greatest sanction any one can possess and of which one cannot be deprived.

Young India, 28-5-'31

Village Democracy in Aundh

Who does not know little Aundh ? Little it is in size and income, but it has made itself great and famous by its Chief having bestowed, unasked, the boon of full self-government on his people. Its chief minister Appasaheb Pant has brought out an attractive pamphlet of nine pages describing the experiment, from which I reproduce the following :

> " Village democracy is the basis of the new Constitution. Every village elects by the vote of all of its adults a Panchayat of five persons. One of these five is elected by the Panchayat unanimously as their president. If this unanimity is not possible then all the adults of the village elect the president out of the Panchayat.
>
> Duly elected presidents of a group of villages constitute the Taluka Panchayat. The Taluka Panchayat decides in its meetings the way in which it would spend the money that it receives. It receives as near as possible half the revenue that is collected in that Taluka. The villages prepare their budgets and present them through their presidents to the Taluka Panchayat. These are discussed and a budget for the whole Taluka is prepared. The villages can spend the money they get as they think fit. As yet education and public works constitute the chief items of expenditure.
>
> The members of the Assembly know not only about the affairs of the Central Government, but they are intimately connected with the everyday work in the villages, and they get acquainted with the work of other villages in their Taluka at the meetings of the Taluka Panchayat. The member of

the Legislative Assembly, in this way, is an active worker almost 12 hours of the day. It is not that he stands for election, gets elected on certain issues, and does not worry about these till the next election. He has to face the villagers every day. The Constitution gives the power of recall to the villagers. 4/5ths of the voters can ask for a re-election of the Panchayat.

The Panchayats dispense justice. The villager need not spend money, go out of his village, and spend days at the Taluka town to get a hearing. The Panchayat decides his case on the spot. The peasant can get a witnesses in the village. And in the cases that are difficult and involve intricate points of law, a sub-judge comes to the village and assists the Panchayat with the dispensation of justice. The sub-judge not only gives expert advice to the Panchayat, but also acts as a guide to the peasant who many a time is completely ignorant of his legal rights and is therefore liable to be misguided by the vested interests — the goondas."

Justice in Aundh is therefore cheap, swift, and effective. In the Panchayats of two Talukas alone 197 criminal and civil suits have been disposed off. In 75 per cent of civil suits and 50 per cent of criminal cases no pleaders were engaged. The witnesses had to be paid nothing, being themselves on the spot. There was thus great saving of time and money. Most cases were decided at a single sitting. The whole village turns out at the hearing of cases. Hence lying is rare, because it can be easily detected. Therefore many cases are compromised out of court. This method of dealing out justice is itself great adult education.

There are 88 village schools for 72 villages. After the introduction of adult franchise, 35 per cent of the adult population received education. Basic education is not neglected, nor is physical.

If Appasaheb has shown the bright side of the experiment, he has not lost sight of the difficulties and

troubles. I omit notice of these. For they are the usual difficulties that attend all such experiments. The leaders of the people, if they retain their faith, will surely surmount them.

Harijan, 11-8-'40

Independence

Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels. Thus, they have to be servants of the people, ready to do their will.

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account

for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestice tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate

power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Harijan, 28-7-'46

Panchayats

Saturday evening prayer meeting was held at village Sammalka where a Panchayatghar had been built. Gandhiji congratulated the villagers on having built a Panchayatghar. Unless they did the work of the Panchayat, the effort would be a waste of time and labour. Distinguished travellers from the world came to India in the days of yore from China and other countries. They came in quest of knowledge and put up with great hardships in travelling. They had reported that in India there was no theft, people were honest and industrious. They needed no locks for their doors. In those days there was no multiplicity of castes as at present. It was the function of the Panchayats to revive honesty and industry. If he asked them after one year, would they show a clean record and would they show that they had no court save their Panchayat? It was the function of the Panchayats to teach the villagers to avoid disputes, if they had to settle them. That would ensure speedy justice without any expenditure. They would need neither the police nor the military.

Then the Panchayat should see to cattle improvement. They should show steady increase in the milk yield. Our cattle had become a burden on the land for want of care. It was gross ignorance to blame the

Muslims for cow slaughter. Gandhiji held that it was the Hindus who killed the cattle by inches through ill treatment. Slow death by torture was far worse than outright killing. The Panchayat should also see to an increase in the quantity of foodstuff grown in their village. That was to be accomplished by properly manuring the soil. The excreta of animals and human beings mixed with rubbish could be turned into valuable manure. This manure increased the fertility of the soil. Then they must see to the cleanliness of their village and its inhabitants. They must be clean and healthy in body and mind.

Gandhiji hoped that they would have no cinema house. People said that the cinema could be a potent means of education. That might come true some day, but at the moment he saw how much harm the cinema was doing. They had their indigenous games. They should banish intoxicating drinks and drugs from their midst. He hoped that they would eradicate untouchability if there was any trace of it still left in their village. The Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Parsees and the Christians should all live as brothers and sisters. If they achieved all he had mentioned, they would demonstrate real independence, and people from all over India would come to see their model village and take inspiration from it.

Harijan, 4-1-'48

Panchayat Raj

(From report of a speech)

In the true democracy of India, the unit was the village. Even if one village wanted Panchayat Raj, which was called republic in English, no one could stop it. True democracy could not be worked by

twenty men sitting at the centre. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village.

Harijan, 18-1-'48

XI

VILLAGE PROTECTION

Peace Brigade

Some time ago I suggested the formation of a Peace Brigade whose members would risk their lives in dealing with riots, especially communal. The idea was that this Brigade should substitute the police and even the military. This reads ambitious. The achievement may prove impossible. Yet, if the Congress is to succeed in its non-voilent struggle, it must develop the power to deal peacefully with such situations.

Let us therefore see what qualifications a member of the contemplated Peace Brigade should possess.

(1) He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God. Without it he won't have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the hearts of all and that there should be no fear in the presence of God. The knowledge of the omnipresence of God also means respect for the lives of even those who may be called opponents or goondas. This contemplated intervention is a process of stilling the fury of man when the brute in him gets the mastery over him.

(2) This messenger of peace must have equal regard for all the principal religions of the earth. Thus,

if he is a Hindu, he will respect the other faiths current in India. He must therefore possess a knowledge of the general principles of the different faiths professed in the country.

(3) Generally speaking this work of peace can only be done by local men in their own localities.

(4) The work can be done singly or in groups. Therefore no one need wait for companions. Nevertheless one would naturally seek companions in one's own locality and form a local Brigade.

(5) This messenger of peace will cultivate through personal service contacts with the people in his locality or chosen circle, so that when he appears to deal with ugly situations, he does not descend upon the members of a riotous assembly as an utter stranger liable to be looked upon as a suspect or an unwelcome visitor.

(6) Needless to say, a peace bringer must have a character beyond reproach and must be known for his strict impartiality.

(7) Generally there are previous warnings of coming storms. If these are known, the Peace Brigade will not wait till the conflagration breaks out but will try to handle the situation in anticipation.

(8) Whilst, if the movement spreads, it might be well if there are some whole-time workers, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be. The idea is to have as many good and true men and women as possible. These can be had only if volunteers are drawn from those who are engaged in various walks of life but have leisure enough to cultivate friendly relations with the people living in their circle and otherwise possess the qualifications required of a member of the Peace Brigade.

(9) There should be a distinctive dress worn by the members of the contemplated Brigade so that in course of time they will be recognized without the slightest difficulty.

These are but general suggestions. Each centre can work out its own constitution on the basis here suggested.

Harijan, 18-6-'38

My Idea of a Police Force

Even in a non-violent State a police force may be necessary. This, I admit, is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa. I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force as I have in respect of an army. Of course I can and do envisage a state where the police will not be necessary; but whether we shall succeed in realizing it, the future alone will show.

The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants, not masters, of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual co-operation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact the policemen will be reformers. Their police work will be confined primarily to robbers and dacoits. Quarrels between labour and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a non-violent State, because the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society. Similarly there will be no room for communal disturbances.

Harijan, 1-9-'40

Non-violent Volunteer Corps

Some time ago an attempt was made, at my instance, to form *shanti dals* but nothing came of it. This lesson, however, was learnt that the membership, in its very nature, of such organizations could not be large. Ordinarily, the efficient running of a large volunteer corps based on force implies the possibility of the use of force in the event of breach of discipline. In such bodies little or no stress is laid on a man's character. Physique is the chief factor. The contrary must obtain in non-violent bodies in which character or soul force must mean everything and physique must take second place. It is difficult to find many such persons. That is why non-violent corps must be small, if they are to be efficient. Such Brigades may be scattered all over; there may be one each for a village or a *mohalla*. The members must know one another well. Each corps will select its own head. All the members will have the same status, but where everyone is doing the same work there must be one person under whose discipline all must come, or else the work will suffer. Where there are two or more Brigades the leaders must consult among themselves and decide on a common line of action. In that way alone lies success.

If non-violent volunteer corps are formed on the above lines, they can easily stop trouble. These corps will not require all the physical training given in *akhadas*, but a certain part of it will be necessary.

One thing, however, should be common to members of all such organizations and that is implicit faith in God. He is the only companion and doer. Without faith in Him these Peace Brigades will be lifeless. By whatever name one calls God, one must realize that

one can only work through His strength. Such a man will never take another's life. He will allow himself, if need be, to be killed and thereby live through his victory over death.

The mind of the man in whose life the realization of this law has become a living reality will not be bewildered in crisis. He will instinctively know the right way to act.

In spite, however, of what I have said above, I would like to give some rules culled from my own experience :

1. A volunteer may not carry any weapons.
2. The members of a corps must be easily recognizable.
3. Every volunteer must carry bandages, scissors, needle and thread, surgical knife, etc. for rendering first aid.
4. He should know how to carry and remove the wounded.
5. He should know how to put out fires, how to enter a fire area without getting burnt, how to climb heights for rescue work and descend safely with or without his charge.
6. He should be well acquainted with all the residents of his locality. This is a service in itself.
7. He should recite *Ramanama* ceaselessly in his heart and persuade others who believe to do likewise.

Man often repeats the name of God parrot-wise and expects fruit from so doing. The true seeker must have that living faith which will not only dispel the untruth of parrot-wise repetition from within him but also from the hearts of others.

Harijan, 5-5-'46

XII

THE VILLAGE WORKER

Village Work

(From a talk to workers of the Gujarat Vidyapith).

The centre of the village worker's life will be the spinning wheel. The idea at the back of Khadi is that it is an industry supplementary to agriculture and co-extensive with it. The spinning wheel cannot be said to have been established in its own proper place in our life, until we can banish idleness from our villages and make every village home a busy hive.

The worker will not only be spinning regularly but will be working for his bread with the adze or the spade or the last, as the case may be. All his hours minus the eight hours of sleep and rest will be fully occupied with some work. He will have no time to waste. He will allow himself no laziness and allow others none. His life will be a constant lesson to his neighbours in ceaseless and joy-giving industry. Our compulsory or voluntary idleness has to go. If it does not go, no panacea will be of any avail, and semi-starvation will remain the eternal problem that it is. He who eats two grains must produce four. Unless the law is accepted as universal, no amount of reduction in population would serve to solve the problem. If the law is accepted and observed, we have room enough to accommodate millions more to come.

The village worker will thus be a living embodiment of industry. He will master all the processes of Khadi, from cotton-sowing and picking to weaving, and will devote all his thought to perfecting them. If

he treats it as a science, it won't jar on him, but he will derive fresh joy from it everyday, as he realizes more and more its great possibilities. If he will go to the village as a teacher, he will go there no less as a learner. He will soon find that he has much to learn from the simple villagers. He will enter into every detail of village life, he will discover the village handicrafts and investigate the possibilities of their growth and their improvement. He may find the villagers completely apathetic to the message of Khadi, but he will, by his life of service, compel interest and attention. Of course, he will not forget his limitations and will not engage in, for him, the futile task of solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness.

Sanitation and hygiene will engage a good part of his attention. His home and his surroundings will not only be a model of cleanliness, but he will help to promote sanitation in the whole village by taking the broom and the basket round.

He will not attempt to set up a village dispensary or to become the village doctor. These are traps which must be avoided. I happened during my Harijan tour to come across a village where one of our workers who should have known better had built a pretentious building in which he had housed a dispensary and was distributing free medicine to the villages around. In fact, the medicines were being taken from home to home by volunteers and the dispensary was described as boasting a register of 1,200 patients a month! I had naturally to criticise this severely. That was not the way to do village work, I told him. His duty was to inculcate lessons of hygiene and sanitation in the village folk and thus to show them the way of preventing illness, rather than attempt to cure them. I

asked him to leave the palace-like building and to hire it out to the Local Board and to settle in thatched huts. All that one need stock in the way of drugs is quinine, castor oil and iodine and the like. The worker should concentrate more on helping people realize the value of personal and village cleanliness and maintaining it at all cost.

Then he will interest himself in the welfare of the village Harijans. His home will be open to them. In fact, they will turn to him naturally for help in their troubles and difficulties. If the village folk will not suffer him to have the Harijan friends in his house situated in their midst, he must take up his residence in the Harijan quarters.

A word about the knowledge of the alphabet. It has its place, but I should warn you against a misplaced emphasis on it. Do not proceed on the assumption that you cannot proceed with rural instruction without first teaching the children or adults how to read and write. Lots of useful information on current affairs, history, geography and elementary arithmetic, can be given by word of mouth before the alphabet is touched. The eyes, the ears and the tongue come before the hand. Reading comes before writing, and drawing before tracing the letters of the alphabet. If this natural method is followed, the understanding of the children will have a much better opportunity of development than when it is under check by beginning the children's training with the alphabet.

The worker's life will be in tune with the village life. He will not pose as a literateur buried in his books, loath to listen to details of humdrum life. On the contrary, the people, whenever they see him, will find him busy with his tools — spinning wheel, loom,

adze, spade, etc. — and always responsive to their meanest inquiries. He will always insist on working for his bread. God has given to everyone the capacity of producing more than his daily needs and, if he will only use his resourcefulness, he will not be in want of an occupation suited to his capacities, however poor they may be. It is more likely than not that the people will gladly maintain him, but it is not improbable that in some places he may be given a cold shoulder. He will still plod on. It is likely that in some villages he may be boycotted for his pro-Harijan proclivities. Let him in that case approach the Harijans and look to them to provide him with food. The labourer is always worthy of his hire and, if he conscientiously serves them, let him not hesitate to accept his food from the Harijans, always provided that he gives more than he takes. In the very early stages, of course, he will draw his meagre allowance from a central fund where such is possible.

Remember that our weapons are spiritual. It is a force that works irresistibly, if imperceptibly. Its progress is geometrical rather than arithmetical. It never ceases so long as there is a propeller behind. The background of all your activities has, therefore, to be spiritual. Hence the necessity for the strictest purity of conduct and character.

You will not tell me that this is an impossible programme, that you have not the qualifications for it. That you have not fulfilled it so far should be no impediment in your way. If it appeals to your reason and your heart, you must not hesitate. Do not fight shy of the experiment. The experiment will itself provide the momentum for more and more effort.

Harijan, 31-8-'34

Pilgrimage to Villages

Shri Sitaram Sastry has been organizing what may be called pilgrimages of workers who convey the message of village service among their surroundings. I would suggest that the pilgrims should avoid all travelling by rail, motor, or even village carts. If they will adopt my advice, they will observe that their work will be more effective and that the expenses will be practically nil. No more than two or three should form a party. I would expect villagers to house and feed the parties. Small parties will be no tax on the resources of villagers, as large ones are likely to be.

The work of the parties should be more in the nature of sanitary service, survey of village conditions and instruction of the villagers as to what they can do without much, if any, outlay of money to improve their health and economic conditions.

Harijan, 22-3-'35

New Ways for Old ?

Workers must not, without considerable experience, interfere with the old tools, old methods and old patterns. They will be safe if they think of improvements, retaining intact the old existing background. They will find that it is true economy.

Harijan, 29-3-'35

Village Worker's Questions

In answer to a question if a village worker can allow himself milk, fruit, and vegetables which villagers cannot afford, Gandhiji wrote :

The main thing to be borne in mind by the village worker is that he is in the village for the villagers' service, and it is his right and his duty to allow himself such articles of diet and other necessaries as would keep him fit and enable him to fulfil his function. This

will necessarily involve the acceptance of a higher standard of living by the village worker, but I have an impression that the villagers do not grudge the worker these necessary things. The worker's conscience is the test. He must be self-restrained, he will eat nothing in order to indulge his palate, he will go in for no luxuries, and will fill all his waking hours with work of service. In spite of this, it is likely that a handful of people will cavil at his mode of life. We have to live that criticism down. The diet I have suggested is not quite unobtainable in a village, with a certain amount of labour. Milk can generally be obtained, and there are numerous fruits, e.g. *ber*, *karamda*, *mhora* flower, which are easily available, but which we count of no value because they are so easily available. There are all kinds of leaves available which grow wild in our villages, which we do not use because of sheer ignorance or laziness (if not snobbery). I am myself using numerous varieties of these green leaves which I had never tried before, but which I find I should have used. It is quite possible to make a cow in a village pay for her upkeep and maintenance. I have not tried the experiment but I think it should be possible. I have also an impression that it is not impossible for the villagers to obtain and live on the same articles of diet as the village workers and thus to adopt the same standard of life.

Harijan, 24-8-'35

A Talk to Village Workers

(Extract)

Khadi will certainly occupy the centre of the village industries. But remember that we have to concentrate on making the villages self-sufficing in Khadi.

Out of self-sufficing Khadi will follow commercial Khadi as a matter of course.

You will of course take up any other industry available in villages and for which you can find a market, care being taken that no shop has to be run at a loss and no article produced for which there is no market. Give eight hours of your day to any home craft you like and show to the villagers that as you earn your wage, even so can they earn it by eight hours' work.

You will also not take a companion to work with you. Our policy is to send a single worker to a village or group of villages. That will enable him to bring his resourcefulness into full play. He may pick out any number of companions from the village itself. They will work under his direction, but he will be mainly responsible for the village under his charge.

Let us not be tempted by the allurements of the machine age ; let us concentrate on rendering our own body-machines perfect and efficient instruments of work, and let us get the best out of them. This is your task. Go ahead with it, without flinching.

Harijan, 2-11-'35

Fear Complex

Many workers are so frightened of village life that they fear that if they are not paid by some agency they will not be able to earn their living by labouring in villages, especially if they are married and have a family to support. In my opinion this is a demoralizing belief. No doubt, if a person goes to a village with the city mentality and wants to live in villages the city life, he will never earn enough unless he, like the city people, exploits the villagers. But if a person settles in a village and tries to live like the villagers,

he should have no difficulty in making a living by the sweat of his brow. He should have confidence that if the villagers who are prepared to toil all the year round in the traditional unintelligent manner can earn their living, he must also earn at least as much as the average villager. This he will do without displacing a single villager, for he will go to a village as a producer, not as a parasite.

If the worker has the ordinary size family, his wife and one other member should be full-time workers. Such a worker won't immediately have the muscle of the villager, but he will more than make up for the deficiency by his intelligence, if only he will shed his diffidence and fear complex. He would be doing productive work, and not be a mere consumer, unless he gets an adequate response from the villagers, so as to occupy the whole of his time in serving them. In that case he will be worth the commission on the additional production of the villagers induced by his effort. But the experience of the few months that the village work has gone on under the aegis of the A.I.V.I.A. shows that the response from the villagers will be very slow and that the worker will have to become a pattern of virtue and work before the villagers. That will be the best object-lesson for them which is bound to impress them sooner or later, provided that he lives as one of them and not as a patron seated amongst them to be adored from a respectful distance.

The question, therefore, is what remunerative work can he do in the village of his choice? He and the members of the family will give some time to cleaning the village, whether the villagers help him or not, and he will give them such simple medical assistance as is within his power to give. Every

person can prescribe a simple opening drug or quinine, wash a boil or wound, wash dirty eyes and ears, and apply a clean ointment to a wound. I am trying to find out a book that will give the simplest directions in the ordinary cases occurring daily in the villages. Anyway these two things must be an integral part of village work. They ought not to occupy more than two hours of his time per day. The village worker has no such thing as an eight hours' day. For him the labour for the villager is a labour of love. For his living, therefore, he will give eight hours at least in addition to the two hours. It should be borne in mind that under the new scheme propounded by the A.I.S.A.* and A.I.V.I.A. all labour has an equal minimum value. Thus a carder who works at his bow for one hour and turns out the average quantity of cards will get exactly the same wage that the weaver, the spinner or the paper-maker would, for the given quantity of their respective work per hour. Therefore, the worker is free to choose and learn whatever work he can easily do, care being always taken to choose such labour whose product is easily saleable in his village or the surrounding area or is in demand by the Associations.

One great need in every village is an honest shop where unadulterated food-stuffs and other things can be had for the cost price and a moderate commission. It is true that a shop, be it ever so small, requires some capital. But a worker who is at all known in the area of his work should command sufficient confidence in his honesty to enable him to make small wholesale purchases on credit.

* All-India Spinners' Association.

I may not take these concrete suggestions much further. An observant worker will always make important discoveries and soon know what labour he can do to earn a living and be at the same time an object-lesson to the villagers whom he is to serve. He will therefore have to choose labour that will not exploit the villagers, that will not injure their health or morals but will teach the villagers to take up industries to occupy their leisure hours and add to their tiny incomes. His observations will lead him to direct his attention to the village wastes including weeds and the superficial natural resources of the village. He will soon find that he can turn many of them to good account. If he picks up edible weeds, it is as good as earning part of his food. Mirabehn has presented me with a museum of beautiful marble-like stones which serve several useful purposes as they are, and I would soon convert them into bazaar articles if I had leisure and would invest into simple tools to give them different shapes. Kakasaheb had, given to him, split bamboo waste that was destined to be burnt, and with a rude knife he turned some of it into paper knives and wooden spoons both saleable in limited quantities. Some workers in Maganwadi occupy their leisure in making envelopes out of waste paper blank on one side.

The fact is the villagers have lost all hope. They suspect that every stranger's hand is at their throats and that he goes to them only to exploit them. Divorce between intellect and labour has paralysed their thinking faculty. Their working hours they do not use to the best advantage. The worker should enter such villages full of love and hope, feeling sure that where men and women labour unintelligently and remain

unemployed half the year round, he working all the year round and combining labour with intelligence cannot fail to win the confidence of the villagers and earn his living honestly and well by labouring in their midst.

'But what about my children and their education ?' says the candidate worker. If the children are to receive their education after the modern style, I can give no useful guidance. If it be deemed enough to make them healthy, sinewy, honest, intelligent villagers, any day able to earn their livelihood in the home of their parents' adoption, they will have their all-round education under the parental roof and withal they will be partly earning members of the family from the moment they reach the years of understanding and are able to use their hands and feet in a methodical manner. There is no school equal to a decent home and no teachers equal to honest virtuous parents. Modern high school education is a dead weight on the villagers. Their children will never be able to get it, and thank God they will never miss it if they have the training of the decent home. If the village worker is not a decent man or woman, capable of conducting a decent home, he or she had better not aspire after the high privilege and honour of becoming a village worker.

Harijan, 23-11-'35

Village Workers' Questions

At the workers' meeting, instead of asking Gandhiji to address them, they gave him a list of questions on which he was requested to enlighten them.

The first question was about the duties of the village workers. The only duty of the village worker was to serve the villagers, said Gandhiji, and he could

best serve them if he kept the eleven vows in front of him as a beacon-light. The vows were contained in two couplets composed by Vinoba and now repeated at each prayer by inmates of most of the Ashrams in the country :

अहिंसा सत्य अस्तेय ब्रह्मचर्य असंग्रह,
शरीरश्रम अस्वाद सर्वत्र भयवर्जन,
सर्वधर्मीं समानत्व स्वदेशी स्पर्शभावना
हीं एकादश सेवावीं नम्रत्वें व्रतनिश्चयें।

[Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, *brahmacharya*, non-possession, body-labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, *swadeshi* (restricting oneself to the use and service of one's nearest surroundings in preference to those more remote), spirit of unexclusive brotherhood — these eleven vows should be observed in a spirit of humility.]

The other question was about the livelihood of the village worker. How was he to earn it ? Was he to draw an allowance from an institution, or to earn it by labouring for it, or to depend upon the village for it ? The ideal way, said Gandhiji was to depend upon the village. There was no shame therein, but humility. There was no scope for self-indulgence either, for he could not think of a village which would encourage or tolerate self-indulgence. All that the worker need do was to work for the village all his working hours, and to collect whatever grain and vegetables he needed from the village. He might collect a little money too (for postage and other monetary expenditure) if he should need it, though Gandhiji did not think he could not do without it. The village would willingly support him if he had gone

there at the invitation of the village. He could conceive an occasion when the villagers might not be able to tolerate his views and withdraw their support, as, for instance, they did when he admitted untouchables in the Satyagrahashram in 1915. Then he should work for his living. It was no use depending on an institution.

The third question was about body-labour. The village worker was in the village to do as much body labour as possible and to teach the villagers to outgrow idleness. He might do any kind of labour, but give preference to scavenging. Scavenging was certainly productive labour. He liked some of the workers' insistence on devoting at least half an hour on work entirely of service and of a productive kind. Scavenging certainly came under that category. Also grinding ; for, money saved is money gained.

The fourth question was about maintaining a diary. Gandhiji had no doubt that the village worker must be prepared to account for every minute of his waking hours and must fill them with work and mention it distinctly in his diary. A real diary was a mirror of the diarist's mind and soul, but many might find it difficult to make a truthful record of their mind's activities. In that case they might confine themselves to a record of their physical activities. But it should not be done in a haphazard way. Simply saying, " Worked in the kitchen " would not do. One may have whiled away one's time in the kitchen. Specific items of work should be mentioned.

The fifth question was about work among *dublas* who work more or less as serfs in certain parts of Gujarat. Service of *dublas* said Gandhiji, meant readiness to share their toil and their hardships, and to get

into touch with their masters and to see that they dealt with them justly and kindly.

Summing up, Gandhiji said : " The village worker will leave politics alone. He may become a Congress member, but he may not take part in an election campaign. He has his work cut out for himself. The Village Industries Association and the Spinners' Association were both created by the Congress, and yet they work independently of the Congress. That is why they and their members steer clear of all Congress politics. That is the non-violent way.

" He will also leave village factions alone. He must go and settle there determined to do without most of the things he does not do without in a city. If I sit down in a village I should have to decide what things I should not take with me to the village, however inherently harmless those things may be. The question is whether those things will sort well or ill with the life of an ordinary villager. He will be incorruptible and stand like a rock against the inroad of temptations and save the village from them. Even one pure soul can save a whole village, as one Bibhishana saved Lanka. Sodom and Gomorrah were not destroyed so long as there was one pure soul left in them.

Harijan, 29-2-'36

Danger from Within

No movement or organization having vitality dies from external attack. It dies of internal decay. What is necessary is character above suspicion, ceaseless effort accompanied by ever increasing knowledge of the technique of the work and a life of rigorous simplicity. Workers without character, living far above the ordinary life of villagers, and devoid of the

knowledge required of them for their work, can produce no impression on the villagers.

As I write these lines instances of those workers who for want of character or simple living damaged the cause and themselves recur to my mind. Happily instances of positive misconduct are rare. But the greatest hindrance to the progress of the work lies in the inability of workers of quality to support themselves on the village scale. If every one of such workers puts on his work a price which village service cannot sustain, ultimately these organizations must be wound up. For the insistence of payments on the city scale except in rare and temporary cases would imply that the gulf between cities and villages is unbridgeable. The village movement is as much an education of the city people as of the villagers. Workers drawn from cities have to develop village mentality and learn the art of living after the manner of villagers. This does not mean that they have to starve like the villagers. But it does mean that there must be a radical change in the old style of life. While the standard of living in the villages must be raised the city standard has to undergo considerable revision, without the worker being required in any way to adopt a mode of life that would impair his health.

Harijan, 11-4-'36

A Talk to Students of the Village Workers' Training School

I propose to speak to you about the ideal of work and life that you have to keep in view and work towards.

You are here not for a career in the current sense of the term. Today man's worth is measured in

Rs. as. ps. and a man's educational training is an article of commerce. If you have come with that measure in mind, you are doomed to disappointment. At the end of your studies you may start with an honorarium of ten rupees and end with it. You may not compare it with what a manager of a great firm or a high official gets.

We have to change the current standards. We promise you no earthly careers, in fact we want to wean you from ambition of that kind. You are expected to keep your food-bill within Rs 6 a month. The food-bill of an I.C.S. may come to Rs 60 a month, but that does not mean that he is or will be on that account physically or intellectually or morally superior to you. He may be for all his sumptuous living even inferior in all these respects. You have come to this institution because, I presume, you do not value your qualifications in metal. You delight in giving your service to the country for a mere pittance. A man may earn thousands of rupees on the Stock Exchange but may be thoroughly useless for our purposes. They would be unhappy in our humble surroundings and we should be unhappy in theirs. We want ideal labourers in the country's cause. They will not bother about what food they get, or what comforts they are assured by the villagers whom they serve. They will trust to God for whatever they need, and will exult in the trials and tribulations they might have to undergo. This is inevitable in our country where we have 7,00,000 villages to think of. We cannot afford to have a salaried staff of workers who have an eye to regular increments, provident funds and pensions. Faithful service of the villagers is its own satisfaction.

Some of you will be tempted to ask if this is also the standard for the villagers. Not by any means. These prospects are for us servants and not for the village-folk our masters. We have sat on their backs all these years, and we want to accept voluntary and increasing poverty in order that our masters' lot may be much better than it is today. We have to enable them to earn much more than they are earning today. That is the aim of the Village Industries Association. It cannot prosper unless it has an ever-increasing number of servants such as I have described. May you be such servants.

Harijan, 23-5-'36

Village Work

(Extract from Gandhiji's conversation with students of the Village Workers' Training School, Wardha).

Q. Do the village folk come to see you ?

A. They do, but not without fear, and perhaps even suspicion. These also are among the many shortcomings of villagers. We have to rid them of these.

Q. How ?

A. By gently insinuating ourselves into their affections. We must disabuse them of the fear that we have gone there to coerce them, we must show them by our behaviour that there is no intention to coerce, nor any selfish motive. But this is all patient work. You cannot quickly convince them of your *bona fides*.

Q. Don't you think that only those who work without any remuneration or allowance can inspire confidence in them, i.e. those who accept nothing whether from any Association or from the village ?

A. No. They do not even know who is and who is not working for remuneration. What does impress

them is the way in which we live, our habits, our talks, even our gestures. There may be a few who suspect us of a desire to earn ; we have to dispel their suspicion no doubt. And then do not run away with the feeling that he who accepts nothing from an Association or from the village is by any means an ideal servant. He is often a prey to self-righteousness which debases one.

Q. You teach us village crafts. Is that to give us a means of earning our livelihood or to enable us to teach the villagers ? If it is for the latter object, how can we master a craft in the course of a year ?

A. You are being taught the ordinary crafts, because unless you know the principles you will not be able to help people with suggestions. The most enterprising among you would certainly earn a living by following a craft. The things we teach here are such that you are likely to be able to bring to the villagers better knowledge of them. We have improved grinding stones and rice-husking stones and oil-presses. We are carrying on experiments in improving our tools and we have to take the improvements to them. Above all there is truth and honesty in business that we have to teach them. They adulterate milk, they adulterate oil, they will adulterate truth for petty gain. It is not their fault, it is ours. We have so long ignored them and only exploited them, never taught them anything better. By close contact with them we can easily correct their ways. Long neglect and isolation has dulled their intellect and even moral sense. We have to brighten them up and revive them all along the line.

Harijan, 25-7-'36

A Villager's Questions

'A Humble Villager of Birbhum' living in Santiniketan sends me through Deenabandhu Andrews the following questions:

1. What is an ideal Indian village in your esteemed opinion and how far is it practicable to reconstruct a village on the basis of an 'Ideal Village', in the present social and political situation of India?

2. Which of the village problems should a worker try to solve first of all and how should he proceed?

3. What should be the special theme of village exhibitions and museums in a miniature form? How should such exhibitions be best utilized for the reconstruction of a village?

1. An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village. In the present circumstances its cottages will remain what they are with slight improvements. Given a good zamindar, where there is one, or co-operation among the people, almost the whole of the programme other than model cottages can be worked out at an

expenditure within the means of the villagers including the zamindar or zamindars, without Government assistance. With that assistance there is no limit to the possibility of village reconstruction. But my task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves if they have mutual co-operation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. I am convinced that they can, under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income. There are in our villages inexhaustible resources not for commercial purposes in every case but certainly for local purposes in almost every case. The greatest tragedy is the hopeless unwillingness of the villagers to better their lot.

2. The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation. It is the most neglected of all the problems that baffle workers and that undermine physical well-being and breed disease. If the worker became a voluntary *bhangi*, he would begin by collecting night-soil and turning it into manure and sweeping village streets. He will tell people how and where they should perform daily functions and speak to them on the value of sanitation and the great injury caused by its neglect. The wroker will continue to do the work whether the villagers listen to him or no.

3. The spinning wheel should be the central theme of all such village exhibitions and the industries suited to the particular locality should revolve round it. An exhibition thus arranged would naturally become an object-lesson for the villagers and an educational treat when it is accompanied by demonstrations, lectures and leaflets.

Harijan, 9-1-'37

Our Villages

A young man who is trying to live in a village and earn his livelihood has sent me a pathetic letter. He does not know much English. I am therefore giving the letter below in an abridged form :

> "Three years ago when I was 20 years old I came to this village life after spending 15 years in a town. My domestic circumstances did not allow me to have college education. The work you have taken up for village revival has encouraged me to pursue village life. I have some land. My village has a population of nearly 2,500. After close contact with this village I find the following among more than three-fourths of the people:
>
> (1) Party feelings and quarrels.
> (2) Jealousy.
> (3) Illiteracy.
> (4) Wickedness.
> (5) Disunion.
> (6) Carelessness.
> (7) Lack of manners.
> (8) Adherence to the old meaningless customs.
> (9) Cruelty.
>
> This is an out of the way place. No great man has ever visited such remote villages. The company of great ones is essential for advancement. So I am afraid to live in this village. Shall I leave this village? If not, what guidance will you give me?"

Though no doubt there is exaggeration in the picture drawn by the young correspondent, his statement may be generally accepted. The reason for the tragic state is not far to seek. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers. The

defects noticed by the correspondent are not inherent in village life. Those who have settled in villages in the spirit of service are not dismayed by the difficulties facing them. They knew before they went that they would have to contend against many difficulties including even sullenness on the part of villagers. Only those, therefore, who have faith in themselves and in their mission will serve the villagers and influence their lives. A true life lived amongst the people is in itself an object-lesson that must produce its own effect upon immediate surroundings. The difficulty with the young man is, perhaps, that he has gone to the village merely to earn a living without the spirit of service behind it. I admit that village life does not offer attractions to those who go there in search of money. Without the incentive of service village life would jar after the novelty has worn out. No young man having gone to a village may abandon the pursuit on the slightest contact with difficulty. Patient effort will show that villagers are not very different from city-dwellers and that they will respond to kindliness and attention. It is no doubt true that one does not have in the villages the opportunity of contact with the great ones of the land. With the growth of village mentality the leaders will find it necessary to tour in the villages and establish a living touch with them. Moreover the companionship of the great and the good is available to all through the works of saints like Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Tulsidas, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar, and others too numerous to mention though equally known and pious. The difficulty is to get the mind tuned to the reception of permanent values. If it is modern thought — political, social, economical, scientific — that is meant, it is

possible to procure literature that will satisfy curiosity. I admit, however, that one does not find such as easily as one finds religious literature. Saints wrote and spoke for the masses. The vogue for translating modern thought to the masses in an acceptable manner has not yet quite set in. But it must come in time. I would, therefore, advise young men like my correspondent not to give in but persist in their effort and by their presence make the villages more livable and lovable. That they will do by serving the villages in a manner acceptable to the villagers. Everyone can make a beginning by making the villages cleaner by their own labour and removing illiteracy to the extent of their ability. And if their lives are clean, methodical and industrious, there is no doubt that the infection will spread in the villages in which they may be working.

Harijan, 20-2-'37

Requisite Qualifications

[The following are some qualifications prescribed by Gandhiji for Satyagrahis. But as a village worker was according to him also to be a true Satyagrahi, these qualifications may be regarded as applying also to a village worker. — Ed.]

1. He must have a living faith in God, for He is his only Rock.

2. He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and therefore have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.

3. He must be leading a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of his cause to give up his life and his possessions.

4. He must be a habitual Khadi-wearer and spinner. This is essential for India.

5. He must be a teetotaller and be free from the use of other intoxicants in order that his reason may be always unclouded and his mind constant.

6. He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.

The qualifications are not to be regarded as exhaustive. They are illustrative only.

Harijan, 25-3-'39

Essential Items of Village Work

If rural reconstruction were not to include rural sanitation, our villages would remain the muck-heaps that they are today. Village sanitation is a vital part of village life and is as difficult as it is important. It needs a heroic effort to eradicate age-long insanitation. The village worker who is ignorant of the science of village sanitation, who is not a successful scavenger, cannot fit himself for village service.

It seems to be generally admitted that without the new or basic education the education of millions of children in India is well-nigh impossible. The village worker has, therefore, to master it, and become a basic education teacher himself.

Adult education will follow in the wake of basic education as a matter of course. Where this new education has taken root, the children themselves become their parents' teachers. Be that as it may, the village worker has to undertake adult education also.

Woman is described as man's better half. As long as she has not the same rights in law as man, as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long we should know that India is

suffering from partial paralysis. Suppression of woman is a denial of Ahimsa. Every village worker will, therefore, regard every woman as his mother, sister or daughter as the case may be, and look upon her with respect. Only such a worker will command the confidence of the village people.

It is impossible for an unhealthy people to win Swaraj. Therefore we should no longer be guilty of the neglect of the health of our people. Every village worker must have a knowledge of the general principles of health.

Without a common language no nation can come into being. Instead of worrying himself with the controversy about Hindi-Hindustani and Urdu, the village worker will acquire a knowledge of the *rashtrabhasha*, which should be such as can be understood by both Hindus and Muslims.

Our infatuation for English has made us unfaithful to provincial languages. If only as penance for this unfaithfulness the village worker should cultivate in the villagers a love of their own speech. He will have equal regard for all the other languages of India, and will learn the language of the part where he may be working, and thus be able to inspire the villagers there with a regard for their own speech.

The whole of this programme will, however, be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality. Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient Khadi with which to cover himself. It also means

that the cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely non-violent means.

Harijan, 18-8-'40

All-round Village Service

Replying to a question at the Constructive Workers' Conference, Gandhiji said:

A Samagra Gramasevak must know everybody living in the village and render them such service as he can. That does not mean that the worker will be able to do everything single-handed. He will show them the way of helping themselves and procure for them such help and materials as they require. He will train up his own helpers. He will so win over the villagers that they will seek and follow his advice. Supposing-I go and settle down in a village with a *ghani*, I won't be an ordinary *ghanchi* earning 15-20 rupees a month. I will be a Mahatma *ghanchi.* I have used the word 'Mahatma' in fun but what I mean to say is that as a *ghanchi* I will become a model for the villagers to follow. I will be a *ghanchi* who knows the Gita and the Quran. I will be learned enough to teach their children. I may not be able to do so for lack of time. The villagers will come to me and ask me: "Please make arrangements for our children's education." I will tell them: "I can find you a teacher but you will have to bear the expenses." And they will be prepared to do so most willingly. I will teach them spinning and when they come and ask me for the services of a weaver, I will find them a weaver on the same terms as I found them a teacher. And the weaver will teach them how to weave their own cloth. I will inculcate in them the importance of hygiene and sanitation and when they come and ask

me for a sweeper I will tell them: "I will be your sweeper and I will train you all in the job." This is my conception of Samagra Gramaseva.

Harijan, 17-3-'46

Village Factions

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to by-pass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enter our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English-educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India which are the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villages. Of course, we are to steer clear

of local politics and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to by-pass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village, one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experience. I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village, trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all the local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

Harijan, 2-3-'47

XIII

STUDENTS AND THE VILLAGES

Grown up students and therefore all college students should begin village work even whilst they are studying. Here is a scheme for such part time workers.

The students should devote the whole of their vacation to village service. To this end, instead of taking their walks along beaten paths, they should walk to the villages within easy reach of their institutions and study the condition of the village folk and befriend them. This habit will bring them in contact with the villagers who, when the students actually go to stay in their midst, will by reason of the previous occasional contact receive them as friends rather than as strangers to be looked upon with suspicion. During the long vacation the students will stay in the villages and offer to conduct classes for adults and to teach the rules of sanitation to the villagers and attend to the ordinary cases of illness. They will also introduce the spinning wheel amongst them and teach them the use of every spare minute. In order that this may be done students and teachers will have to revise their ideas of the uses of vacation. Often do thoughtless teachers prescribe lessons to be done during the vacation. This in my opinion is in any case a vicious habit. Vacation is just the period when students' minds should be free from their routine work and be left free for self-help and original development. The village work I have mentioned is easily the best form of recreation and light instruction. It is obviously the best preparation for dedication to exclusive village service after finishing the studies.

The scheme for full village service does not now need to be elaborately described. Whatever was done during the vacation has now to be put on a permanent footing. The villagers will also be prepared for a fuller response. The village life has to be touched at all points, the economic, the hygienic, the social and the political. The immediate solution of the economic distress is undoubtedly the wheel in the vast majority of cases. It at once adds to the income of the villagers and keeps them from mischief. The hygienic includes insanitation and disease. Here the student is expected to work with his own body and labour to dig trenches for burying excreta and other refuse and turning them into manure, for cleaning wells and tanks, for building easy embankments, removing rubbish and generally to make the villages more habitable. The village worker has also to touch the social side and gently persuade the people to give up bad customs and bad habits, such as untouchability, infant marriages, unequal matches, drink and drug evil and many local superstitions. Lastly comes the political part. Here the worker will study the political grievances of the villagers and teach them the dignity of freedom, self-reliance and self-help in everything. This makes in my opinion complete adult education. But this does not complete the task of the village worker. He must take care and charge of the little ones and begin their instruction and carry on a night school for adults. This literary training is but part of a whole education course and only a means to the larger end described above.

I claim that the equipment for this servcie is a large heart and a character above suspicion. Given

these two conditions every other needed qualification is bound to follow.

The last question is that of bread and butter. A labourer is worthy of his hire. A living wage is assured. Beyond that there is no money in it. You cannot serve both self and country. Service of self is strictly limited by that of the country and hence excludes a living beyond the means of this absolutely poor country.

Young India, **26-12-'29**

XIV

WOMEN AND THE VILLAGES

Commenting on child marriage, Gandhiji wrote:

It is the mothers who have to be educated to understand their privilege and duty of refusal. Who can teach them this but women? I venture to suggest therefore that the All-India Women Conference to be true to its name has to descend to the villages. The bulletins are valuable. They only reach a few of the English-knowing city-dwellers. What is needed is personal touch with the village women. Even when, if ever, it is established, the task won't be easy. But some day or other the beginning has to be made in that direction before any result can be hoped for. Will the A.I.W.C. make common cause with the A.I.V.I.A.? No village worker, no matter how able he or she is, need expect to approach villagers purely for the sake of social reform. They will have to touch all spheres of village life. Village work, I must repeat, means real education, not in the three R's but in opening the

minds of the villagers to the needs of true life befi
thinking beings which humans are supposed to

Harijan, 16-11-'35

XV

THE CONGRESS AND THE VILLAGES

Mass Contact

The Working Committee has emphasized the necessity of the members of the Legislatures and other workers taking the constructive programme of 1920 to the three crore villagers between whom and their representatives a direct contact has been established. The representatives may if they choose neglect them, or give them some paltry or even substantial relief from financial burdens; but they cannot give them self-confidence, dignity, and the power of continuously bettering their own position unless they will interest them in the fourfold constructive programme, i.e. universal production and use of Khadi through universal handspinning, Hindu-Muslim or rather communal unity, promotion of total prohibition by propaganda among those who are addicted to the drink habit, and removal by Hindus of untouchability root and branch.

It was announced in 1920 and 1921 from a thousand platforms that attainment of Swaraj by the non-violent method was impossible without these four things. I hold that it is not less true today.

It is one thing to improve the economic condition of the masses by State regulation of taxation, and wholly another for them to feel that they have bettered their condition by their own sole personal effort.

Now this they can only do through handspinning and other village handicrafts.

Similarly it is one thing to regulate communal conduct by means of pacts between leaders, voluntary or imposed by the State ; it is wholly different for the masses to respect one another's religious and outward observances. This cannot be done unless the legislators and workers would go out among the villagers and teach them mutual toleration.

Again it is one thing to impose, as we must, prohibition by law, and another to sustain it by willing obedience to it. It is a defeatist armchair mentality which says that it cannot work without an expensive and elaborate system of espionage. Surely if the workers went out to the villagers and demonstrated the evil of drink wherever it is prevalent, and if research scholars found out the causes of alcoholism, and proper knowledge was imparted to the people, prohibition should not only prove inexpensive but profitable. This is a work essentially for women to handle.

Lastly, we may banish by statute, as we must, the evil consequences of untouchability. But we cannot have real independence unless people banish the touch-me-not spirit from their hearts. The masses cannot act as one man or with one mind unless they eradicate untouchability from their hearts.

Thus this and the three other items are a matter of true mass education. And it has become imperatively necessary now that three crores of men and women have rightly or wrongly power put into their hands. However hedged in it is, Congressmen and others who want the suffrages of these voters have it in their hands either to educate the three crores of

mankind along the right lines or the wrong. It would be the wrong line to neglect them altogether in matters which most vitally concern them.

Harijan, 15-5-'37

Qualifications for Members of Lok Sevak Sangh

[Just before Gandhiji was assassinated he had drafted a constitution for the Lok Sevak Sangh (or association of servants of the people) into which he wanted the Congress to dissolve itself, and he drew up the following amongst other requirements for those who would be its members. — Ed.]

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaller. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family, and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions, and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3. He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

5. He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of *Nai Talim*,

in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

Harijan, 15-2-'48

XVI

GOVERNMENT AND THE VILLAGES

What the Government Can Do

It is legitimate to ask what Congress Ministers will do for Khaddar and other village industries now that they are in office. Whether a Minister is separately appointed or not, a department for the work is surely necessary. In these times of scarcity of food and clothing, this department can render the greatest help. The Ministers have experts at their disposal through the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. It is possible to clothe today the whole of India in Khadi on the smallest outlay and in the shortest time possible. Each Provincial Government has to tell the villagers that they must manufacture their own Khaddar for their own use. This brings in automatic local production and distribution. And there will undoubtedly be a surplus for the cities at least to a certain extent which, in its turn, will reduce the pressure on the local mills. The latter will then be able to take part in supplying the want of cloth in other parts of the world.

How can this result be brought about ?

The Governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture Khaddar for the needs of their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The Governments in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton wherever required, at cost price and the tools

of manufacture also at cost, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in, say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of Khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges.

The villages will be surveyed and a list prepared of things that can be manufactured locally with little or no help and which may be required for village use or for sale outside, such for instance, as *ghani*-pressed oil and cakes, burning oil prepared through *ghanis*, hand-pounded rice, *tadgud*, honey, toys, mats, hand-made paper, village soap, etc. If enough care is thus taken the villages, most of them as good as dead or dying, will hum with life and exhibit the immense possibilities they have of supplying most of their wants themselves and of the cities and towns of India.

Then there is the limitless cattle wealth of India suffering from criminal neglect. Goseva Sangh, as yet not properly experienced, can still supply valuable aid.

Without the basic training the villagers are being starved for education. This desideratum can be supplied by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

Harijan, 28-4-'46

APPENDIX A

MR BRAYNE'S VILLAGE UPLIFT EXPERIMENT

I hope the reader carefully followed the articles by Lala Deshraj which were published in five parts. They constitute, I think, a dispassionate review of the famous experiment made by Mr Brayne, the late Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon District, known as the Gurgaon Programme. Whilst the articles were being published, I took up Mr Brayne's book called *The Remaking of Village India* being the second edition of his *Village Uplift in India* as it was originally called. So far as one can judge from Lala Deshraj's articles, the Gurgaon experiment for village remaking must be pronounced virtually a failure. After Mr Brayne's back was turned upon Gurgaon, the people who were working under his inspiration or pressure seem to have gone to sleep, the manure pits lying neglected, the new ploughs rusting and co-education dissolving.

The reason for the failure is not far to seek. The reform came not from within but was super-imposed from without. Mr Brayne made use of his official position to put as much pressure as he could upon his subordinates and upon the people themselves, but he could not carry conviction by force, and conviction so essential to success was lacking. Mr Brayne thought that the results would convince the people. But that is not how reform works. The reformer's path is strewn not with roses but with thorns, and he has to walk warily. He can but limp, dare not jump. Mr Brayne was impatient and wanted to cover a long distance in one stride, and he failed.

When an official becomes a reformer, he must realize that his official position is not a help but a hindrance. In spite of his Herculean efforts people will suspect him and his motives, and they will scent danger where there is none. And when they do certain things, they often do them more to please the official than to please themselves.

The other handicap that Mr Brayne laboured under was the almost fatal facility he had for receiving money. In my opinion money is the last thing that a reformer needs in his campaign. It comes to him unsolicited in exact proportion to his strict needs. I have always distrusted reformers who have pleaded want of financial aid as an excuse for their ill-success. Where there is zeal, adequate knowledge and faith in oneself, financial assistance has always come ; but Mr Brayne relied more upon money for the success of his experiment than upon his faith in himself and the people. So in spite of his having had Rs 50,000 a year according to Lala Deshraj's estimate, he complains that many things await development only for want of money. His ambition is insatiable. So much for the actual experiment itself.

The book deserves careful study apart from the experiment. There can be no doubt about Mr Brayne's sincerity. Every page of the book proves it. The intrinsic worth of many of the author's suggestions is indisputable. The book is ably written, and every one who wishes to do village reconstruction work should make haste to study Mr Brayne's volume. The defects in the villages described by Mr Brayne are as follows :

1. The peasant's methods of farming are bad.
2. His village is filthy ; he lives in dirt, squalor, disease and suffering.

3. He is the prey of epidemic diseases.
4. He wastes all his wealth.
5. He keeps his womenfolk in degradation and slavery.
6. He pays no attention to his home or his village, and spends no time or thought over bettering himself and his surroundings.
7. He resists all change; he is illiterate and ignorant of what progress village folk in other civilized countries and in other parts of his own country are making, and what he can himself make if he sets his mind to it.

There is much exaggeration in this description. The Indian villager's methods of farming are certainly not bad. Many have testified that he has a workable knowledge of agriculture which is not to be despised. The second and third defects have, I fear, to be admitted. The fourth is largely, if not wholly, inadmissible if only because he has no wealth to waste. The fifth, sixth and seventh are largely true. The remedies suggested are eighteen. I summarize them as follows:

1. Keep good cattle.
2. Use modern implements.
3. Use good seed.
4. Put up Persian wheels.
5. Stock the manure in pits.
6. Stop making dung cakes.
7. Make use of village banks.
8. Bank your fields and divide them into squares according to levels to prevent wastage of rain water.
9. Consolidate your holdings.
10. Harvest for the whole year through the well.
11. Sow trees on every vacant space.
12. Inoculate your cattle against disease.

13. Kill the field-rats, porcupines and pests that share your crops with you.

14. Develop pasture land.

15. Cultivate half your land well and devote the rest to pasture.

16. Use under-ground pipes for carrying your well water.

17. Stop the sand-dunes by sowing whatever vegetation will grow and hold the sand.

18. Straighten and clean your canal and channels.

Many of the suggestions are admirable. What is new requires careful experiment. Much of what is old is not capable of enforcement. As to modern implements, after fifteen years' continuous experimenting and without any prejudice against implements and after having tried many of them at the Ashram, we have come to the conclusion that most of these implements are useless, and I may assure the reader that we have not made a hash of it all. We are making steady progress, but there are very few modern implements, which we have found to be of much use. I hope to give later a definite note upon this Ashram experiment. Meanwhile I would say to those who go in for modern implements: 'Hasten slowly.' Conservation of manure and the consequent stopping of its wanton destruction through dung cake making are suggestions worth taking up. Fragmentation of holdings is undoubtedly a crying evil. Drastic legislation alone can cope with an evil so extensive as this meaningless fragmentation. All the suggestions require true education and self-confidence. The starving peasant has no education and has no self-confidence, because he thinks that penury is an inheritance from

which he cannot shake himself free. Mr Brayne has valuable suggestions about sanitation. He would allow no sweepings, rubbish, dung, ashes etc. to be thrown anywhere but into properly dug pits. He gives elaborate instructions for using manure pits as latrines. I cannot resist quoting the following long but truthful instructive paragraph :

> "This rubbish lying in heaps all round and inside the village, and this nightsoil, scattered thick everywhere outside the village, and sometime inside too, dries up and is blown all over the village by the wind and is stirred up by the feet of men and cattle. It falls into your food and drink, gets into every one's eyes and nose, and goes into their lungs with every breath they breathe. It thus forms part of your air and food and drink, and you and your children are daily poisoned by the filth of your village. Besides this, it breeds innumerable flies, which sit first on the filth and then on your food, your dishes, and on your children's eyes and mouths. And remember that the flies do not wash their feet or take off their shoes when they visit you. Can you imagine any quicker way of securing permanent ill-health and bad eyes, and an early grave for yourself and famliy ?"

"The Gurgaon village houses," says the author, "are the direct successors of the caves of prehistoric man." He would therefore have the villager to open windows in his house. He will guard against smallpox by free vaccinations. He would guard against plague by inoculation and rat-killing, against cholera by well-cleaning and proper arrangements for drawing water, and against malaria by quinine and mosquito nets. The assurance with which Mr Brayne speaks of vaccination and inoculation is amazing when one knows that medical authorities speak of both with the greatest caution. Vaccination is daily being proved as an exploded remedy, and plague inoculation and the

like, whatever merit they may possess as a temporary relief measure if they do at all, are soul-destroying remedies making man a weakling dying many times before his natural death. There is abundant testimony to show that where there is clean living there is no fear of plague or smallpox, both being diseases born of filth and insanitation. Well-cleaning and a claen method of drawing water are no doubt good not only as a precaution against cholera but many other things. Quinine without milk is a useless remedy, and mosquito nets, I know from personal experience, are not within the reach of millions. More than once has Mr Brayne betrayed ignorance of the chronic economic distress of the seething millions of India. It is perfectly useless to suggest remedies which are beyond the present means of the people. What the people may be capable of doing when the reformer's dream is realized is irrelevant to a consideration of what they ought to do whilst the reform is making its way among them.

The following is the remedy suggested for waste :

> "Eradicate the present ideas of absurd expenditure on Kaj and other such ceremonies, jewellery, weddings and quarrelling."

I fear that this 'absurd expenditure' exists largely only in Mr Brayne's imagination. It is confined to the fewest people. The vast majority of the masses have no money to spend on any ceremony. The jewellery hoarding is the old official trick. I have now moved amongst lakhs of women all over India. I have myself inveighed against jewellery and dispossessed many sisters of it. I know that there is no beauty about it. But if the number of those who can afford ceremonies is small, that of those who can afford jewellery is smaller still. Millions wear either hideous stone or

wooden pieces. Many wear brass or copper ornaments, and some wear silver bangles and anklets. Only a microscopic number have any gold on their persons. Whilst therefore the advice to turn jewellery into cash and bank it is in my opinion perfectly sound, it is irrelevant when considered as part of a programme for village reconstruction. The same may be said about quarrelling. Whilst the amount of litigation is no doubt great in itself and shameful, it is again confined to those who have, but the millions are the have-nots, and in a programme of village reconstruction one has to think of this vast, helpless, ignorant and hopeless majority.

To ensure a happy home Mr Brayne would humanize the women and make them honourable and equal partners in the home. He will send the girls to the school with the boys till they are too big to be so sent. He will not marry them while they are children. He is energetic and even eloquent on the rights of women. Here are two passages worthy of consideration :

> "When your wife is to have a baby, you choose a dark and dirty room and send for a sweeper's wife. Why do you not send for the sweeper when you break your arm? Why not train some of your own women as midwives? Sweepers' wives have no more business to be midwives than have to be doctors. Would it not be far nicer for your wife to be attended by one of her own people at such a risky time than by the lowest caste in the village? There is no more noble work for a high-caste woman than the work of a nurse or *dai*."
>
> "Don't reserve the darkest and least airy part of the house for your wife and family. They are just as important as you, and their ill-health is just as bad for you as your own. You can keep fit by going to the fields. Your women and children must spend a lot of their time at home. Therefore give them the best and airiest part of the house."

Here is another passage of poetic beauty:

> "Man is the only creature that discriminates between his male and female children, and treats the females as inferior. Your mother was once a girl. Your wife was once a girl. Your daughters will one day be mothers. If girls are an inferior creation, then you are yourselves inferior."

I hope the reader will share my appreciation of the following passage about dogs:

> "The dog is called the friend of man. In Gurgaon he is treated not much better than a woman, and is the enemy of man. Keep a dog by all means, but feed it regularly, give it a name and a collar, train it and look after it properly. Don't allow uncared-for dogs to roam the village, spoil your food, keep you awake at night by barking, and finally go mad and bite you."

There is much more that is valuable in his book. There is not a defect in the villages that has escaped his eagle eye. His ideas on village education are in my opinion perfectly sound and difficult to improve upon. I cannot resist quoting the following passage:

> "The object of a village school is to make better, more intelligent, healthier and happier villagers. If a ploughman's son comes to school, his schooling should so prepare him that when he comes to follow the tail of his father's plough he will pick up the work more quickly and display more intelligence in all his business than his father did. Above all, the children must learn at school how to lead healthy lives and protect themselves from epidemic diseases. What is the use of teaching boys who are going to go blind, become in some way physically incapacitated, or even to die before they reach manhood? What is the use of education when the home is dirty, uncomfortable, and epidemics are liable to sweep away the whole family, or leave the children blind or maimed?"

And to this end he would make the village teacher not a man who could only impart a knowledge of the three R's. He must become a genuine village leader,

a centre of light and culture whom the people trust, to whom they refer their problems and whom they consult when they are in doubt or difficulty.

> "The teacher must take and hold his proper place in village life. He must practise what he preaches, and set the example of working with his own hands at all the uplift measures he recommends. His gospel is the dignity of labour and the dignity of social service, and he must be as willing to set about cleaning the village or adjusting an iron plough as he is to teach reading and writing."

I must restrain myself now, and be satisfied with recommending a perusal of this valuable contribution to village reconstruction literature. The scheme so far as it goes is on the whole good and practicable. If the information that has been given by Lala Deshraj is to be relied upon, as in my opinion it should be, the execution has been to say the least, extremely defective, not however through want of will and effort on the part of both Mr Brayne and his partner, but because of the official environment and groove which he and his were unable to overcome. But this limitation is one which all of us similarly placed would labour under. I know that Mr Brayne has been libelling India and putting before his English audiences deductions from his limited observations which they could not possibly challenge and which at that distance would appear in a much more exaggerated form than they would if repeated in India. But I have not allowed my examination of his book to be affected either by his English calumnies or by the apparent failure of his experiment. As a reformer myself deeply interested in village reconstruction I have endeavoured to take what good I can out of a book sincerely written.

Young India, 14-11-'29

APPENDIX B

USEFUL HINTS

(*By J. C. Kumarappa*)

(The following excerpts are taken from Prof. J. C. Kumarappa's notes. — M. K. G.)

Co-operative Societies : Co-operative Societies are ideally suited organizations, not only for developing village industries, but also for promoting group efforts by the villagers. A multipurpose village society can serve a very useful purpose in a variety of ways such as :

1. Stocking of raw materials for industries, and food grains needed by the village people.
2. Marketing of village products and distributing the requirements of the people.
3. Distribution of seeds, improved implements and tools, manures such as bonemeal, flesh or fish manure, oilcakes, green manure, seeds etc.
4. To maintain a common stud bull for the area.
5. To stand between the Government and the people in the matter of collection and payment of taxes, etc.

Much of the wastage caused to food grains in transport and handling, and the expenses of collecting food grains to a central place and redistributing them again to the villages can be eliminated through the agency of a co-operative scoiety which is a very reliable medium both from the government as well as from the public point of view. If stocks of grain are held by co-operative societies in villages, the remuneration of local officials can be conveniently paid partly in kind and this may facilitate the much desired system of collecting revenue also in kind.

Agriculture : The production of crops should be controlled keeping two considerations in mind. (1) The

locality must try to produce its own food requirements and raw materials required for primary necessities of life in preference to commercial crops. (2) It must try to produce raw materials suitable for village industries rather than for factories, for example, instead of growing thick rinded sugar-cane or long staple cotton as demanded by factories, soft rinded sugar-cane as can be crushed by village *kolhus* for *gur*-making and short staple cotton as required for hand-spinning should be grown. The surplus land can be utilized to supplement crops needed by surrounding districts. Land utilized for sugar-cane of the factory requirements, tobacco, jute and other money crops should be eliminated or reduced to the minimum. In order to make the farmers adopt this policy heavy dues or excess land revenue should be levied on land used to raise money crops and that too after a licence has been obtained. This will give the farmers no incentive to go in for money crops in preference. On the whole the prices of the agricultural products should be made to compare favourably with those of industrial products.

Commercial crops such as tobacco, jute, sugar-cane, etc. are doubly wasteful. They reduce the food production for man as well as for animals which would otherwise have got their fodder from food crops.

The supply of *gur* which may be reduced with the decline of sugar-cane crops of the factory varieties can be made good by the production of *gur* from palm trees now tapped for toddy or from those which are found or can be grown in waste lands in sufficient numbers as practically to meet our demand in this respect. The best land put under sugar-cane today can then be utilized for the production of cereals, fruits and vegetables which India needs so badly today.

Irrigation: The need for providing irrigation facilities to all the villages cannot be emphasized too greatly. This is the foundation upon which agriculture depends for its progress, in the absence of which it remains a gamble. A drive for sinking wells, enlarging and dredging tanks and building canals has to be launched. The power engines used in rice and flour mills now can be acquired by the Governments to pump up water from tube wells. No proper manuring can be done without water facilities, as manure in the absence of water is harmful.

Harijan, 12-5-'46

Manure: Much of the waste of the village including sweepings, bones, human excreta etc. that go to spoil the sanitation of the village at present could be utilized into making compost manure which is very easily done and which is as good a manure as cow dung. Bones and oil cakes which are usually exported out of the country should not be allowed to leave the villages. The bones must be crushed locally with the help of *chunam chakkis* after being charred a little in the *chunam bhattis* and the meal distributed amongst the farmers.

Manure-making in villages may be given out on subsidized contract. This will not only ensure the cleanliness of the village but it will also raise the sweepers engaged in making compost and manure to the level of traders.

Oil mills which take away the oil-seeds from the villages and give only oil in return, sending the cake abroad, are depriving the land of a valuable form of fertilizer. This must be stopped altogether. This is one of the fundamental reasons why oil-seeds should

not be allowed to go out of the villages, but should be crushed in the local country *ghanis*. This will retain both the oil and the cake in the village and be a source of enrichment to men, cattle and the land.

In the name of increasing the fertility of the soil, much attempt is being made to introduce chemical fertilizers into our agriculture. The experience gained through the use of such chemical fertilizers throughout the world is clear enough to guide us against the inroads to be made by these fertilizers. They do not add to the fertility of the soil, but act as stimulants or drugs resulting in immediate bumper crops and in the end bring about a corresponding exhaustion of the land. They also destroy a host of earth worms so essential for agriculture. In the long run such artificial fertilizers prove to be most injurious to the land. Behind the trumpeting of chemical fertilizers lies the anxiety of the fertilizer factory owners to push the sale of their products irrespective of the harm or injury they do to agriculture.

Land Management: Besides increasing the bulk of the manures, the fertility of the soil should be maintained by stopping erosion by means of proper drainage, embankments etc. In the final analysis fertility of the soil is the fountain head from which springs all nourishment for cattle and men in the form of fodder and corn. If the fertility of the soil is reduced, the food produced on it will be of poor quality and consequently the health of the people will suffer. This is why nutrition experts connect up health with agriculture.

Seeds: Selected and improved varieties of seeds are essential for the improvement of agriculture. What

is wanted in this regard is the machinery for effective distribution of seeds. There can be no better medium for this than co-operative societies.

Research: All research in agriculture should be directed towards improving food crops as well as raw materials for village industries rather than money crops such as tobacco and raw materials for factories, e.g. thick rinded sugar-cane and long staple cotton.

Distribution of Land for the Production of Balanced Diet: The food question, which has assumed serious proportions now, does not promise an immediate solution. The problem is two-fold. The immediate is a caloric shortage and secondly, there is the long standing shortage of protective foods. The first problem may find an easy solution but the second one is going to present difficulties.

It is ordinarily presumed that an acre of land provides more calories through the production of grains than through any other food. But apart from the question of calories, grains are very poor suppliers of protective food factors. Therefore, if we aim at getting these factors from cereals only, huge quantities of grains will be required. On the other hand, if the grains are substituted and supplemented by foods like fruits and vegetables, nuts, oil-seeds, etc., the protective food factors required to make up a balanced diet may be obtained through lesser quantities of these types of food than through grains alone. Even the supply of calories per acre is greater in the case of some of the root vegetables like potatoes than in the case of cereal grains. Thus a balanced diet may be a double blessing and may offer the solution to our problem. It reduces the per capita requirement of land and at the same time supplies the body with all its

requirements in their correct proportions, so as to keep it fit and healthy. It is calculated that the per capita land available in India at present for food cultivation comes to about 0.7 acre. This very land which is found to be too inadequate to meet our requirements in food according to the present distribution of cultivation becomes more than sufficient as only 0.4 acre is the estimated figure required for a balanced diet in the re-ordered system of agriculture. The land of the locality should be so divided for the purpose of growing crops as to provide its population with the materials for a balanced diet rather than merely supplying the cereals for a grain diet as at present. This aspect of the question should be thoroughly investigated and a definite plan chalked out.

Rice: 1. All rice mills should be disbanded as in Tranvancore.

2. All the hullers used for polishing rice should be completely banned.

3. People should be educated about the better nutritive value of whole unpolished rice and about the method of cooking it by practical demonstration and film shows. Polishing of rice should be prohibited or its degree of polishing should be very strictly controlled.

4. Where the paddy husking industry is carried on on an industrial scale for business purposes, in predominantly paddy growing areas, costly equipment such as paddy separators, winnowers etc. should be supplied on hire to a group of artisans through their co-operative society.

5. In view of the fact that the use of unpolished rice is to be advocated and popularized, the movement

of paddy from one place to another will become necessary, and in order that the freight on the extra weight of the paddy may not enhance the price of rice, the freight charges on paddy should be favourably discriminated.

6. In areas where the implements for dehusking paddy and polishing rice are not separate, but both the processes are combined into one of pounding paddy, the resultant product is polished rice. In such cases, dehusking implements, i.e. *chakkis* either of wood, stone or mud, should be introduced, and can even be supplied along with the equipment for other industries through the district demonstration centres. As far as possible the use of rice polishing implements should be discouraged and even a tax may be levied on them to restrict their number. The degree of polishing rice under these licensed polishing implements should also be supervised and controlled. Paddy and other grains and seeds required by the village should be stocked in the village itself, and only the surplus should be sent out. The best agency for all such activities can be the multi-purpose co-operative society.

Grain storage: If storage arrangements are made locally all the wastage through bad storage etc. and conveyance charges will be eliminated. Big towns and cities where proportionately larger stocks of grain are to be held can build *pucca* cement godowns after the model of the godowns at Muzaffarnagar, U.P. These can be built either by the municipality or by private people to be rented out for grain storage. These godowns should be licensed and subjected to periodical inspection, like boilers are at present. An enormous loss of grain occurs through bad storage alone. Such loss is estimated on a conservative basis to be about

3.5 million tons, an amount equal to the declared deficit of grains in India during the current year. The qualitative loss caused by insects, rodents, dampness etc. — all caused by bad storage arrangements —, resulting in all kinds of diseases, is equally enormous. The storage problem is both an urgent and a permanent one and should be tackled in all earnestness and seriousness. In any case, holding stocks in ill-protected godowns, as at present, should be stopped.

If the stocks are held in the villages where they are produced, and all their movements to town and back to villages are eliminated, the chances of their getting damaged are, of course, reduced. Local storage will go a long way towards eradicating black-marketing and is likely to stabilize prices besides removing much of the inconvenience caused to villages in obtaining rations from cities.

Individual holders of stock should be educated in methods for the preservation of grain.

Harijan, 19-5-'46

NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH THEIR MEANINGS

Ahimsa — non-violence ; love

Akhada — physical culture institute

Ashram — a place for spiritual retirement ; Gandhiji's colony of workers

Avatar — incarnation

Bhakri — flat, hard, unleavened bread

Bhangi — scavenger

Brahmacharya — chastity ; continence

Chakki — flour-mill worked by hand

Charkha — spinning wheel

Chatni — a spicy preparation eaten with the main food to add flavour to it

Chunam bhatti — furnace in which lime is first burnt before crushing

Chunam chakki — bullock press for grinding lime used in white-washing

Crore — ten million

Dai — midwife

Dal — pulse

Ganja — hemp whose leaves and buds are bruised and smoked for intoxication

Ghanchi — oil-presser

Ghani — village oil-press worked by a bullock

Ghee — clarified butter

Gita — a sacred book of the Hindus

Goseva Sangh — Association for service of cattle

Gur — unrefined brown product used in place of sugar, and obtained from the juice of palms or of sugar-cane

Harijan — literally people of God, the name Gandhiji gave for 'untouchables'

Hindustani Talimi Sangh — Association for the spread of education based on hand-crafts throughout India
Kaj — feast given on the death of an old person
Khadi (khaddar) — hand-spun, hand-woven cloth
Kisan — peasant
Kolhu — press for crushing sugar-cane or oil-seeds
Kshatriya — a member of the second, or warrior, caste
Lakh — one hundred thousand
Mohalla — a small section of a town
Nayi Talim — new education as advocated by Gandhiji, centring round a craft and related to one's environment
Nazrana — gift offered to a prince or other important person
Panchayat — a council of about five members to look after the affairs of a community
Panchayatghar — meeting-house of the panchayat
Pice — equivalent of an English farthing or half an American cent
Pucca — permanent and well-built
Quran — a sacred book of the Muslims
Raj — rule
Ramanama — name of Rama, i.e. God's name
Rashtrabhasha — national language
Roti — flat, unleavened bread
Ryot — cultivator ; peasant
Samagra Gramseva — all-round village service
Samagra Gramsevak — all-round village worker
Satyagraha — literally clinging to truth ; non-violent resistance
Senna — a medical plant, whose leaves have a laxative effect
Shanti dal — peace brigade

Shikar — hunting

Swaraj — self-government

Tadgud — unrefined brown product used in the place of sugar and obtained from date palm juice

Tahsil — a group of villages treated as an administrative unit

Taluka — a group of villages

Talukdar — owner of a group of villages

Tapasya — penance ; mortification

Toddy — intoxicating drink obtained from palm juice

Vaidya — physician ; physician practising indigenous Ayurvedic medicine

Varnashrama — the principle of hereditary occupations

Zamindar — land-owner

Zamindari — land-holding by a zamindar

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